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CITY OF GOD

WORDS OF WISDOM

FROM

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE
OF THE
VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

MANIFESTED TO MARY OF AGREDA
FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MEN

Translated from the Original Spanish

BY

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IMPRIMATUR

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:—

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English translation of the work entitled "Ciudad de Dios." Wishing you every blessing, I remain

Devotedly in Domino,

✠H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

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What the Universities of Europe, the Religious
Orders and Learned Men Say of the
"Ciudad de Dios."

FORTY years after the first appearance of the "Ciudad de Dios" the great universities of Europe were called upon to give their opinion about this great work. All the faculties, except the Jansenistic members of the Sorbonne at Paris, published highest recommendations. At the same time the learned men and teachers of each religious order that maintained institutions of learning in Europe, were asked to contribute their opinions. The following religious orders complied: The Augustinians, Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, Cistercians, Basilians, Trinitarians, Mercedarians, Minims, Hieronymites, Premonstratensians, Reformed Augustinians, Theatines, Minors of the Regular Clergy, all unanimously endorsing the favorable decision previously published by the University of Salamanca. To the approbation of nearly all the Universities and Religious Orders, were then added the high eulogiums of other learned men, great divines, bishops and princes of the Church and of the Popes and the Roman Congregations. As a sample of what these witnesses said concerning the wonderful "Ciudad de Dios," we here select the official approbation of the University of Louvain, one of the great Universities of Europe.

After pointing out that God's power of giving private revelations to whom He chooses, must not be circumscribed, and after referring to some general rules in regard to private revelations, the document proceeds to say :

“Now, while abiding the decision of the Church concerning the revelations, which are given us under the title of The City of God, we, having read the whole work, say and are of the opinion, that the faithful can read it without danger to their faith and without damage to the purity of morals; for there is not found anything within it, which could lead to relaxation or to indiscreet rigor; but on the contrary, we have come to the conclusion that it will be most useful for enlivening and augmenting the piety of the faithful, the veneration of the most holy Virgin, and the respect for the sacred mysteries.”

“The strong and the weak, the wise and the ignorant, and in fine, all the world will gather richest fruit from the reading of these books: for they contain what is most sublime in theology and in a style so simple, easy and perspicuous that, in order to enter deeply into an understanding of the holy mysteries, no more is necessary than to read them with sound judgment.”

“Combined with this simplicity are found many doctrines and valid proofs, free from contradictions and not easily found in other writings. This History explains more than a thousand difficulties in holy Scripture, in a manner equally natural and wonderful. At every step are encountered exquisite interpretations, until now unknown, and which had been hidden beneath the mere

letter, but are laid open in these writings and brought to the light. In short, the whole work is a beautiful web of scripture passages which, though spun from its different books, are directly and specially woven into a whole for the purpose intended by the Venerable Mother."

"In addition thereto the instructions given by the most holy Virgin at the end of each chapter contain the purest morality, instruct, entertain, and at the same time sweetly inculcate the love of virtue and abhorrence of vice, painting them in the most vivid and natural colours. They do not only convince the intellect, but they contain such a special unction, that they enkindle a sacred ardor in the soul. In meditating upon them one certainly will experience a delight not met with in ordinary writings; and the more they are read the greater is the delight experienced. Finally, the whole work contains something so unwonted and attractive that, once begun, the reading of it can scarcely be relinquished."

"The novelty and variety found in these writings delight and recreate the reader beyond all that is pleasant in the world, at the same time instructing him and inspiring him with new fervor. All can easily persuade themselves that, if the interior life of Christ our Lord and of the most holy Virgin was not just as described in these books, it could certainly have been like it; and that it would have been well worthy of Them, if it was as it is there depicted. All that is there said is befitting the majesty and humility of Christ, and in correspondence with the holiness of the Virgin and the dignity of the Mother; since there is found nothing in the whole work which was not worthy of both one and the other.

"Notwithstanding all this, we should not at all won-

der if the book met with men who are disposed to be critical; for what book is there which can hope to escape the opposition of the people of our times? God has not even provided that the sacred Scriptures should be free from such attack among the greater part of the learned of this world. The whole philosophy of the pagans causes them to join the number of those who are opposed to the cross of Christ crucified; and among that number are also the libertines of our day."

"Of course there are certain points in this work which might give rise to apparent difficulties, and some of them occurred, and do occur, to us. But, in accordance with what we have said of the excellence and usefulness of this work, we have come to the conclusion that these few passages must not hinder us from giving it the commendation already given; besides, we must confess that we might possibly be ourselves mistaken in making these objections."

"This seemed to us the most reasonable course, since in this book there is something more than human. Anything so excellent and sublime cannot be ascribed to an over-excited imagination, since the whole work is consistent throughout. Nor can it be believed to be the work of a perverted mind, for, with a constant equanimity, it treats of the most deeply hidden and abstruse matters without involving itself in any contradictions; though often also it descends to innumerable minute and particular circumstances."

"There are contained in this work such noble, such devout circumstantial and pertinent discourses, as cannot be the result of mere discursive thought. Nor can it be attributed to the demon; for, from beginning to end, it

suggests and breathes nothing but humility, patience and endurance of hardships."

"Therefore, just as 'Ciudad' must without a doubt be attributed to the venerable Mother of Agreda, who is claimed as its author, so she cannot have composed it without particular help from on high. Our conclusive opinion is, that the City of God, for the good of the public, and for the advantages to be derived therefrom, should be brought forth to the light. This is our judgment, which we submit entirely to the supreme decision of the Holy See, to whom alone belongs the right of finally judging such writings."

Louvain, 20th of July 1715.

(Signed) HERMANN DAMEN,

Doctor, Professor Ordinary and
Regent of the Theological
Faculty, Don of Saint Peter,
President of the College of
Arras, Censor of Books, etc.

ANTON PARMENTIER,

Doctor, Professor Ordinary,
Regent of the Theological
Faculty, President of the Great
College of Theologians, etc.

APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3, 1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne, known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting the publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII, Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites, approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and written by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII, when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revelations as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy, objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his objections as interfering with the decree of pope Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has resulted so far in securing her the title of *Venerabilis*, thus clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German translation in 1885, which was approved and highly recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the following terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation to the annotated translation of the Spanish original "Ciudad de Dios" of Mary of Jesus and recommend this book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occasion of great spiritual blessings."

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

✠IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Germany, etc.

"According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and Clement XI the book known as 'Ciudad de Dios' written by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may be read by all the faithful."

"A number of episcopal approbations, the recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, Salamanca, Alcalá and Louvain, and of prominent members of different orders, coincide in extolling the above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal D'Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty years of his previous life as of small consequence in comparison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Venerable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbé Emery, adds: "Only since I read the revelations of Mary of Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother."

"We therefore do not hesitate—in granting our episcopal approbation to—"Ciudad de Dios"—and wish to recommend it to the faithful and especially to our clergy."

✠FRANZ ALBERT,
Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios" is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for the printing of the new edition of the "City of God" now about to be published by the religious of the above-named convent, with the authenticated autograph manuscript of that work there preserved,—and having ascertained by a personal revision of a great part of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition of 'Ciudad de Dios,' with the exception of a few more orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to the autograph of that work as composed and written by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal]

✠JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev Father:—

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English translation of the work entitled 'Ciudad de Dios.' Wishing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

✠ H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publication of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these divisions as follow:

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.

BOOK ONE

Lessons given by the Queen of Heaven in connection with the History of her Life up to her Presentation in the Temple.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST BEGINNINGS OF A GOOD LIFE AS SUGGESTED BY THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY.

My daughter, I wish that thou reap for thyself the fruits which thou desirest from the description of the mysteries and sacraments of my holy life; and let the reward of thy labors be the greater purity and perfection of thy life, disposing thyself by the grace of the Most High to practice what thou hearest. It is the will of my divine Son, that thou exert all thy powers toward that which I shall teach thee, and that thou apply thyself with all thy heart to my virtues and works. Hear me with attentive faith, for I will speak to thee words of eternal life and teach thee the most holy things of a perfect Christian life and what is most acceptable to God. Begin even now to dispose thyself for the reception of the light, in which thou shalt see the hidden mysteries of my most holy life and the doctrine, which thou desirest. Continue in this exercise and write down that which I will teach thee in this regard. And now listen.

It is an act of justice due to the eternal God that the creature coming to the use of reason, direct its very first movement toward God. By knowing, it should begin to love Him, reverence Him and adore

Him as its Creator and only true Lord. The parents are naturally bound to instruct their children from their infancy in this knowledge of God and to direct them with solicitous care, so that they may at once see their ultimate end and seek it in their first acts of the intellect and will. They should with great watchfulness withdraw them from the childishness and puerile trickishness to which depraved nature will incline them if left without direction. If the fathers and mothers would be solicitous to prevent these vanities and perverted habits of their children and would instruct them from their infancy in the knowledge of their God and Creator, then they would afterwards easily accustom them to know and adore Him. My holy mother, who knew not of my wisdom and real condition, was most solicitously beforehand in this matter, for when She bore me in her womb, she adored in my name the Creator and offered worship and thanks for his having created me, beseeching Him to defend me and bring me forth to the light of day from the condition in which I then was. So also parents should pray with fervor to God, that the souls of their children, through his Providence, may obtain Baptism and be freed from the servitude of original sin.

And if the rational creature has not known and adored the Creator from the first dawn of reason, it should do this as soon as it obtains knowledge of the essential God by the light of faith. From that very moment the soul must exert itself never to lose Him from her sight, always fearing Him, loving Him, and reverencing Him. Thou, my daughter, owest this adoration to God from the beginning of thy life; but now I desire thee to practice it in a more perfect manner, as I shall show thee. Direct the eyes of thy soul toward the essence of God, which is without beginning and without

limit, contemplate his infinite attributes and perfections. Consider that He alone is the true holiness, the highest good, the most noble object of creatures, that He alone gave being to all things and without having need of them, sustains and governs them. He is consummate beauty without defect, He is eternal in his love, true in his words and most faithful in his promises. He it was who gave his own life and subjected Himself to sufferings for the good of his creatures without waiting for any merits on their part. Over this wide field of goodness and of benefits extend thy vision and occupy thy faculties without forgetting or wandering away therefrom. For, having obtained such a great knowledge of the highest Good, thine would be a loathsome meanness and disloyalty to forget Him, and horrible would be thy ingratitude, if, after having received an enlightenment so much above the common and ordinary, and divinely infused by faith, thou wouldst allow thy understanding and will to swerve from the course of divine love. If at any time in thy weakness it should nevertheless happen, then quickly seek it again with all dispatch and diligence and return more humbly to the Most High to give Him honor, glory and eternal praise. Remember that thou must consider it thy special duty to do this incessantly for thyself and for all the other creatures and in this I desire thee to exert all thy diligence.

In order to excite thyself to greater efforts, confer in thy heart what thou knowest of my own conduct; how at the first sight of the highest Good, my heart was wounded with love, giving myself entirely to Him in order never to separate myself thereafter. My whole life was consumed in this and I ceased not to press forward in order to arrive at the centre of my desires and affections; for since the Object is infinite, so love can

have no rest or cessation until It is attained. With the knowledge of God and the love of Him should also go the knowledge of thyself, remembering and considering thy insignificance and vileness. Advert that when these truths are well understood, repeated, and meditated upon, they will cause divine effects in the soul.

Having heard these teachings and others of the Queen, I said to her Majesty:

"My Mistress, whose slave I am and to whom I dedicate and consecrate myself anew; not without cause has my heart desired and asked for this day, on which, according to thy maternal condescension, I might come to know thy heavenly doings and hear thy sweet and salutary words. I confess, O Queen, from all my heart, that I can claim no goodness on my part, which deserves such a benefit as a reward and, if I were not obeying thy will and that of thy divine Son, I would look upon the attempt to write thy life as an unpardonable presumption. Accept, O my Lady, this sacrifice of praise from me and speak, that my servant may hear (I Reg. 3, 10). Let thy most delightful voice, O sweetest Lady, resound in my ears (Cant. 2, 4), for Thou hast the words of life (John 6, 69). Continue to teach me and enlighten me, O Lady, that my heart may dilate in the sea of thy perfections, furnishing me with worthy material for the praise of the Almighty. In my bosom burns the fire, enkindled by thy kindness and longing for that, which is most holy and most acceptable to thy eyes. In my inferior members, however, I feel the law of repugnance to the law of the spirit, retarding me and embarrassing me. I justly fear that it will hinder me from attaining the good which Thou, most loving Mother, dost offer to me. Look upon me, therefore, my Lady, as a daughter, teach me as thy disciple, correct me as thy

servant, and compel me as thy slave, whenever I am tardy or disinclined; for, though unwillingly, I fall short through weakness. I will raise my aspirations to know the being of God, and, may his divine grace govern my affections, so that they may become enamored with his infinite perfections and if I attain Him, I will not dismiss Him (Eccli. 24, 24). But Thou, O Lady, Mother of knowledge and of beautiful love, beseech thy Son and my Lord, that He forsake me not in consideration of His liberality toward Thee, Thou Queen and Mistress of all creation."

CHAPTER II.

THE LIGHT OF GRACE IN THE SOUL MYSTERIOUSLY DESCRIBED IN CHAPTER XXI OF THE APOCALYPSE.

My daughter, these chapters contain excellent direction and light, though thou hast left in them many things unsaid. Seek therefore to draw profit from all that thou hast understood and written, beware lest thou receive the light of grace in vain. This in brief I wish thee to remember; be not dismayed, that thou wert conceived in sin, and, as an earthly creature, feelest within thyself the earthly inclinations; but strive against thy passions to a finish. In doing this thou wilt at the same time battle against thy enemies. With the help of the Almighty's grace, thou canst rise above thyself and make thyself a daughter of heaven, whence all grace comes. In order that thou mayest attain thereto, let thy habitation continue to be in the higher regions, keeping thy mind fixed in the knowledge of the immutable Being and perfections of God and never allowing thy attention to be drawn away to another even otherwise necessary object. With this continual presence and memory of God's greatness thou wilt dispose thyself for the influx of the holy Spirit and his gifts in closest friendship and communication with the Lord. In order to evade all hindrance to this his holy Will, which I have already many times pointed out and made manifest to thee, seek to mortify the inferior part of thy being, the seat of the evil inclinations and passions. Die to all that is earthly, sacrifice, in the consciousness of God's

presence, all thy sensitive appetities, fulfill none of their impulses, nor ever satisfy thy own will outside of the narrow limits of obedience. Do not leave the secret refuge of interior recollection, where the Lamb enlightens thee. Adorn thyself for entrance into the bridal chamber of thy Spouse, and permit the hand of the Almighty to array thee in such a manner as He wishes, always seeking to concur with Him and place no obstacle in his way. Purify thy soul by many acts of sorrow for having offended Him, magnify and praise Him with a most ardent love. Seek Him, and rest not until thou hast found Him, whom thy soul desires, hold Him and do not let Him go (Cant. 3, 24). I wish thee to proceed on thy pilgrimage like one, who has already arrived at the journey's end, keeping thy gaze continually on the source of all glory. Let the rule of thy life be to walk in the light of faith and in the brightness, with which the Omnipotent shall fill and illumine thy soul, and to continue to love, adore and reverence Him, without any cessation or diminution. This being the will of the Almighty in thy regard: consider what shall be thy gain, but remember also, what may be thy loss. See thou do not run this risk; subject thyself with thy whole will and being to the guidance of thy Spouse, of myself, and of holy obedience, which must always be thy standard.—Thus the Mother of the Lord instructed me, and I answered Her, filled with great confusion:

“Queen and Mistress of all creation, whose servant I am and wish to be for all the eternities! Forever will I praise the Omnipotence of the Most High, because He chose thus to exalt Thee. But since Thou art so fortunate and so powerful with the Almighty, I conjure Thee, O my Lady, to look with an eye of mercy upon me, thy poor and miserable servant. Make me

partaker in the gifts which the Lord has placed in thy hands for distribution among the needy, raise me up from my abject state, enrich my nakedness and poverty, and as a Mistress compel me to desire and do what is most perfect, helping me to find grace in the eyes of thy most holy Son and my Lord. In thy hands do I place my salvation, O Mistress and Queen! do Thou take charge of it to the end; for thy desires are holy and powerful on account of the merits of thy most holy Son and on account of the promises of the most holy Trinity, which are pledges for the fulfillment of all thy petitions and desires without fail. I myself have nothing to oblige Thee, as I am unworthy, but as a substitute I offer Thee, my Lady, thy own sanctity and clemency."

CHAPTER III.

SOLUTION OF A DIFFICULTY.

My daughter, hear the solution of thy difficulty. In the vision of the Divinity I instantaneously recognized my innocence and the stainlessness of my Conception. These favors and benefits of the Almighty are of such a nature, that the more they are understood and made secure, so much the more will they excite care and solicitude for their preservation and for the avoidance of any offense of their Author. They are given to his creatures out of pure goodness and are accompanied with such clear intuition regarding their dependence on the merits of my most holy Son, that the soul immediately centers its attention only on its own unworthiness and insufficiency, convinced that it cannot merit them and that it cannot appropriate them to itself as being foreign to its nature. As they are seen to belong to such a high Master, to whom they can revert to be distributed according to his pleasure, a most deep-felt solicitude fills the soul lest it lose again, what is thus freely given. The soul therefore begins to work with great diligence in order to preserve them and to multiply the talent (Matth. 25, 15), since it understands that to be the only means of keeping the deposit and of fulfilling the object for which they were given, namely, to make them bear fruit and to contribute to the glory of the Creator. This care is precisely the condition necessary for the preservation of the benefits and graces received.

Besides this the soul is made to understand the

human frailty and the freedom of the will for good or evil. Of this knowledge the Almighty did not deprive me, nor does He deprive any one of it, as long as he wanders through this life; but He gives it to all according to measure, in order that by its guidance they may be filled with holy fear of falling into any fault, even the smallest. In me this light was greater and I clearly saw that a small fault prepares the way for another, and that the second is only a punishment of the first. It is true that on account of the blessings and graces of the Lord sin was impossible in me. But his Providence so disposed of this knowledge, that my absolute security from sin was hidden to me; I saw that as far as depended on me alone I could fall, and that it was the divine will that preserved me. Thus He reserved to Himself his knowledge of my security, and left me in solicitude and holy fear of sinning during my pilgrimage. From the instant of my Conception until my death I never lost this fear, but on the contrary grew in it as life flowed on.

The Most High also gave me humility and discretion, not to ask or to examine too closely this mystery, but solely to direct my attention toward increasing my confidence in his goodness with a view to obtain his assistance against sin. Thence resulted those two necessary dispositions of a Christian life; the one a quiet preservation of tranquillity in the soul, the other the constant presence of a holy fear and watchfulness, lest the treasure be lost. As this latter was a filial fear, it did not diminish love, but inflamed and increased it more and more. These two dispositions of love and fear produced in my soul a perfect harmony with the divine will, governing all my actions, so as to draw me away from evil and unite me with the highest Good.

This, my dear friend, is the great test of spiritual

things: that they come with true enlightenment and sound doctrine; that they teach greater perfection of virtues and excite a strong impulse toward seeking it. This is the excellence of the benefits which descend from the Father of lights, that they give assurance and confidence while making the soul humble, and that they encourage while exciting solicitude and watchfulness, though still preserving tranquillity and peace in this solicitude; for all these effects are not incompatible in fulfilling the will of God. Do thou, O soul, offer humble and fervent thanks to the Lord, because with so little deserving of thine He has been so liberal with thee and has so greatly enlightened thee with divine light, breaking for thee the seal of his secret archives and yet filling thee with holy fear of his displeasure. Nevertheless make use of this fear with measure and strive instead to excel in love. Thus with these two wings raising thyself above the earth and above thyself, try to rid thyself of the inordinate disturbance of excessive fear, and leave thy cause with the Lord and make his cause thy own. Let fear be with thee until thou art purified and cleansed of thy sins and of thy ignorance, but also love the Lord in order that thou mayest be transformed in Him, and set Him as the Master and the Arbiter of thy actions without desiring to be above any person. Do not trust thy own judgment, and be not wise in thy own conceit (Prov. 3, 7), for the judgments of men are only too easily blinded by their passions, throwing them out of their course and drawing after them the will as their captive. Thus it comes, that men fear what is not to be feared, and rejoice in that which is not profitable. Take heed lest thou be dissipated by every slight interior consolation, but hesitate and restrain thyself until thou findest with tranquil solicitude the proper measure in all things. This happy medium

thou wilt always find, if thou remain subject to thy superiors and willingly accept that, which the Most High works in thee and teaches thee. Although thy undertakings may be good as regards the intentions, they must nevertheless also conform to the requirements of obedience and of prudence, for without this guidance they are usually deformed and without any profitable result. Be thou therefore in all things solicitous about that, which is most holy and perfect.

CHAPTER IV.

A CERTAIN DAILY EXERCISE OF THE QUEEN AFTER HER BIRTH.

My dearest daughter, it is true, that divine justice closed heaven against mortals on account of the first sin, until my most holy Son should open it by satisfying most abundantly for men through his earthly life and death. It was befitting and just, that this same Redeemer, who had united to Himself the redeemed members and opened heaven, should as their Chief enter before any of the children of Adam. If Adam had not sinned, it would not have been necessary to follow this course; for men would have ascended of themselves in order to enjoy the Divinity in the empyrean heavens; having however foreseen the fall of man, the most blessed Trinity provided for the course followed at present. This great mystery was referred to by David in the twenty-third psalm, when speaking of the spirits of heaven he repeats twice "Lift up, ye princes, your gates; and be ye lifted up, ye eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." They are here called the gates of the angels, because only for them were they open, but for mortal men they were closed. Although these heavenly courtiers were aware of the fact that the incarnate Word had already thrown back the bars and bolts of guilt, and that He was now ascending rich and glorious with the spoils of death and sin, bringing with Him the fruits of his Passion in the accompanying hosts of the glorious saints released from limbo; nevertheless the holy angels give

vent to their admiration and breathless suspense at this wonderful novelty, asking: "Who is this King of glory?" For He was a man and of the same nature as the one who had lost for himself and for all his race the right to enter into heaven.

They themselves give answer to the question saying: "The Lord who is strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle," the Lord of virtues, the King of glory. This was as if they confessed their conviction, that this Man, who was now coming up from the world in order to open the eternal gates, was not a mere man and is not included under the law of sin; but that He was true God and true man, who, strong and powerful in battle, had overcome the strong-armed one (Luc. 11, 22), that reigned in the world, had taken away his reign and despoiled him of his weapons. And He was the Lord of virtues, as one that had exercised them as a Master, with sovereignty over them, and without any contradiction of sin and defect. As the Lord of virtues and as the Lord of glory, He now came in triumph, distributing virtues and glory to his redeemed, for whom as man He had suffered and died, and whom as God He was now raising up to the eternal and beatific vision, having broken the bars and shackles imposed by sin.

Since this, O soul, was the work of my dear Son, the true God and man, He, as the Lord of virtues and graces, exalted and adorned me with them from the first moment of my Immaculate Conception. And as, moreover, the hindrance of sin touched me not, I was free from the impediments which prevented other mortals from entering into the eternal gates of heaven; on the contrary the powerful arm of my Son acted with me as being the Mistress of all virtues and as the Queen of heaven. Because He was to vest Himself and assume

unto Himself human nature from my flesh and blood, He was beforehand in preparing me and making me like Himself in purity and exemption from fault and in other divine gifts and privileges. As I was not a slave of sin, I exercised the virtues not as a subject, but as a Mistress, without contradiction, but with sovereignty, not like the children of Adam, but like the Son of God, who was also my Son.

For these reasons the celestial spirits, who had possession of the eternal gates as their own, opened them up for me, perceiving that the Lord had created me more pure than all the most exalted spirits in heaven, and made me their Queen, and the Mistress of all creation. Remember also, my dearest, that he who makes the law can also dispense with it freely, and this the supreme Lord and Legislator did with me, extending the sceptre of his clemency toward me more readily than Assuerus did to Esther. For the common laws regarding others and consequent on their guilt, applied not to me, who was to be the Mother of the Author of Grace. Although I could not, as a mere creature, merit such blessed privileges, yet the divine clemency and goodness of God turned toward me with full liberality and He was pleased with the humility of his servant, in order that for all eternity the Author of such prodigies might be praised. Do thou also, my Daughter, according to my directions, bless and magnify Him for these benefits bestowed upon me.

My admonition to thee, whom in spite of thy weakness and poverty I have chosen with such generous kindness as my disciple and companion, is this: that thou strive with all thy powers to imitate me in an exercise, in which I persevered during my whole life from the very first moment of my birth, omitting it on not a single

day, however full of cares and labors it might have been. This exercise was the following: every day at beginning of dawn, I prostrated myself in the presence of the Most High and gave Him thanks and praise for his immutable Being, his infinite perfections, and for having created me out of nothing; acknowledging myself as his creature and the work of his hands, I blessed Him and adored Him, giving Him honor, magnificence and Divinity, as the supreme Lord and Creator of myself and of all that exists. I raised up my spirit to place it into his hands, offering myself with profound humility and resignation to Him and asking Him to dispose of me according to his will during that day and during all the days of my life, and to teach me to fulfill whatever would be to his greater pleasure. This I repeated many times during the external works of the day, and in the internal ones I first consulted his Majesty, asking his advice, permission and benediction for all my actions.

Be very devout toward my most sweet name. I wish that thou be convinced of the great prerogatives and privileges, which the Almighty concedes to it, so that I myself, when I saw them in the Divinity, felt most deeply obliged and solicitous to make a proper return; and whenever the name MARY occurred to my mind (which happened often) and whenever I heard myself called by that name, I was aroused to thankfulness and urged to new fervor in the service of the Lord, who gave it to me. Thou hast the same name and I wish, that in proportion it should cause the same effects in thee and that thou imitate me faithfully by following the lesson given thee in this chapter, without failing in the least point from this day onward. And if in thy weakness thou shouldst fail, rouse thyself immediately, and in the presence of thy Lord and mine, acknowledge thy fault,

confessing it in sorrow. Repeating these holy exercises over and again with solicitous care, thou shalt find forgiveness for imperfections and grow accustomed to strive after what is highest in all virtues and most pleasing to the Lord. Then, following the light which He gives and in pursuance of that which is most pleasing and agreeable to thy own tastes and mine, thou shalt not be denied the grace of employing thyself entirely in listening, attending to and obeying in all things thy Spouse and Lord, who seeks in thee only what is most pure, most holy and perfect, and a will prompt and eager to put the same into practice.

CHAPTER V.

A WONDERFUL MYSTERY IN THE QUEEN'S INFANCY.

My Queen and heavenly Lady, if without being offended, Thou wilt, as a kind Mother, listen to my ignorant talk, I will ask of thy kindness the solution of some doubts which have occurred to me in this chapter. If my ignorance and boldness should transgress the limits, instead of answering me, my Mistress, correct me with maternal mercy. My doubt is: Whether in this thy infancy Thou didst feel the necessities and hunger which according to the natural order, children do feel? And if Thou didst feel them, how didst Thou suffer these annoying inconveniences? And how didst Thou ask for the nourishment and the other help necessary, since Thou wast so wonderfully patient that Thou wouldst not make use of tears, which serve other infants as speech and words? I am also ignorant, whether the hardships of that age were not most irksome to thy Majesty, such as to have thy virginal body clothed and unclothed as infants are, to be fed with the food of other children, and to undergo the other experiences of that age? For other children undergo them bereft of reason, while nothing was concealed from Thee, O Lady. When I look upon Thee as a child in age and yet as grown up in thy capacity of judging of things, it seems to me almost impossible that there should have been no inconveniences in this matter, in the time or the measure, or in other circumstances regarding the treatment allotted to Thee during thy infant life. Thy celestial prudence taught Thee

to preserve dignity and composure, yet Thou didst not intimate the wants and needs of thy age and condition either by crying, as an infant, or by word of mouth, as one grown up. Thus they could not know thy needs and could not treat Thee as one endowed with reason; for even thy mother could not know all these things, nor could she provide for all that was necessary, since she knew not the time nor the manner of serving thy Majesty in all things. All these considerations excite my admiration and arouse in me the desire of knowing the mysteries thus concealed.

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

My daughter, since thou art full of wonder, I will inform thee in all kindness. It is true that I was in possession of grace and of the use of reason from the first instant of my Conception, as I have so often shown thee; I underwent the hardships of infancy as other children and I was reared and treated as others of the same condition. I felt hunger, thirst, sleepiness and other infirmities of the body, and as a daughter of Adam I was subject to these accidental necessities; for it was just that I should imitate my most holy Son, who subjected Himself to these hardships and defects, in order that He might merit so much the more and in order that He might be an example to the rest of mortals for their imitation. As I was governed by divine grace, I made use of eating and sleep in moderation, allowing myself less than others, and only so much as was proper for the augmentation and the preservation of my life and health. Disorder in these things is not only against virtue, but against the well-being of nature itself, which is invaded and ravaged by it. On account of my exquisite composition I was affected by hunger and thirst more painfully

than other children; and the want of nourishment was more dangerous to me; but if it was given to me at unseasonable times, or in excess, I bore it with patience, until by some befitting sign I could manifest my needs. I felt less the want of sleep on account of the opportunity which it furnished me for the presence and the heavenly conversation of the angels.

That I was bound and wrapped in clothes was not painful to me, but it was a cause of much joy, for I understood by divine light, that the incarnate Lord was to suffer a most cruel death and was to be bound most shamefully. Whenever I was alone during my childhood I placed myself in the form of a cross, praying in imitation of Him; for I knew that my Beloved was to die in that position, although I did not know then that the Crucified was to be my Son. In all the difficulties, which I underwent after I was born into the world, I was resigned and contented, for I never lost sight of one consideration, which I desire thee always to keep in mind. It is this: that thou ponder in thy heart and in thy soul the truths, which I saw, so that thou mayest form a correct judgment of all things, giving to each that esteem and value which is its due. In regard to this the children of Adam are ordinarily full of error and blindness, but I desire that thou, my daughter, share it not with them.

As soon as I was born into the world and made aware of the light, which shone upon me, I felt the effects of the elements, the influence of the planets and of the stars, of the earth which sustained me, of the nourishments which preserved me, and of all the other things of this life. I gave thanks to the Author of all things, acknowledging his works as benefits freely bestowed upon me, and not as dues, which He owed to me. Therefore, when anything was wanting of the necessities of life I re-

mained in peace and contentedness and deemed it all perfectly reasonable and proper in my regard, since I had merited none of the gifts and could justly be deprived of all of them. Hence, if I acknowledged this, thereby merely asserting a truth which the human reason cannot ignore nor deny, where have mortals their intellect, or what use do they make of their understanding when, at the refusal of things which they desire and of which perhaps they do not even profit, they begin to get sad and lash themselves into fury one against the other, and even against their God, as if they were suffering some injury at his hands? Let them inquire what treasures and riches they did possess before they came into life? What services had they rendered unto God in order to merit them? And if out of nothing there cannot arise anything, and if they could not merit the being which they have received, what obligation is there on the part of God to preserve out of justice, what was given to them entirely gratuitously? That God created man was of no benefit to Himself; but to man it was a benefit, and one as great as the being given to him, and as high as the object for which it was given. And if in his creation man becomes indebted so much that he never can pay his debt, tell me what right can he invoke at present for his preservation? Has he not received his being without merit and many times forfeited it? How can he claim the guarantee and pledge of unfailing plenty?

If the first transaction and operation was a mortgage and a debt by which man binds himself, how can he with such impatience demand favors? And if in spite of all this, the supreme goodness of the Creator furnishes him graciously with what is necessary, why should he be agitated by the want of superfluities? O my daughter, what an execrable disorder and what a despicable blind-

ness of mortals is this? For that, which the Lord gives them gratuitously, they do not thank Him, or even give Him acknowledgment, and for that which He denies them justly and sometimes most mercifully, they are restless and proudly desirous, and they try to procure it by unjust and forbidden means, throwing themselves into the very destruction which flies from them. The first sin alone, committed by man, was sufficient to cancel man's right to the friendly service of all the other creatures; and if the Lord himself would not restrain them, they would turn in vengeance upon man and refuse to render any service or help for sustaining his life. The heavens would deny them their light and benign influences, the fire would refuse its heat, the air would cease to serve for respiration, and all the other things would in their particular way refuse their services, since they would in justice be bound to refuse them. Then when the earth would deny its fruits, and the elements their moderation and their assistance, and all the other creatures would arm themselves to avenge the wrongs of their Creator (Sap. 5, 18), perhaps disgraced man would humiliate himself in his vileness and would not heap up the wrath of the Lord for the unerring day of accountance, when all his dreadful guilt will be exposed.

But thou, my dear friend, fly from such base ingratitude, and humbly acknowledge that thou hast received thy being and life gratuitously, and that, gratuitously, its Author preserves it for thee. Freely dost thou receive all the other benefits, without any merit of thine; and thus, receiving much and repaying little, thou makest thyself daily less worthy of favors, while the liberality of the Most High grows continually with thy indebtedness. Let this thought be uppermost in thee always, in order that it awaken and move thee to many acts of vir-

tue. If any of the irrational creatures fail thee, I desire thee to rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to his Majesty, and bless them for their obedience to the Creator. If the rational creatures persecute thee, love them with all thy heart and regard them as the instruments of divine justice, which afford thee some opportunity of rendering satisfaction for thy deficiency. Rather strengthen and console thyself in labors, adversities and tribulations, not only considering them as fully deserved by the faults committed, but deeming them ornaments of the soul and most rich jewels given thee by thy Spouse.

Let this be the answer to thy doubt: over and above this I wish to give thee an instruction, which may be found in all the chapters. Consider, my soul the punctuality of my mother Anne in fulfilling the precept of the law of the Lord, to whose Majesty this solicitude was very pleasing. In this thou shouldst imitate her by observing inviolate each and every one of the precepts of thy rules and constitutions; for God will reward most liberally this fidelity and severely punish any negligence in this matter. Without sin I was conceived and it was not necessary to present me to the priest in order that the Lord might purify me; nor was this necessary for my mother, since she was very holy. Nevertheless we humbly obeyed the law and thereby we merited great increase of virtue and grace. Despising just and wise laws and frequently dispensing with them, destroys the worship and fear of God, and fatally confuses government among men. Beware of easily dispensing in the obligations of the religious state, either for thyself or for others. If infirmity or some other just cause make it advisable, let it be done with moderation and with the approbation of the confessor, thus justifying dispensation before God and before men by the approbation of holy

obedience. If thou findest thyself weary or weakened, do not at once become remiss in the strict observance, for God will give thee strength according to thy faith in Him. Do not give any dispensation on pretext of being overworked. Make that which is less serve and advance that which is the greater, let the creatures serve the Creator. On account of thy position as superioress thou hast less excuse; for in the observation of the laws thou must give a good example, leading on the others. Therefore, for thyself, no merely human motive can serve as an excuse, though thou mayest sometimes excuse thy sisters and subjects on such account. Note moreover, my dearest, that I desire thee to lead in perfection; therefore this rigor is necessary, not even taking into consideration, that the observance of the precepts is a duty to God and men. Let no one think that it is enough to fulfill all obligations toward the Lord, and at the same time tread under foot the duty towards his neighbor, to whom is due good example and avoidance of all real scandal.—O Queen and Mistress of all creation, would that I could attain the purity and the virtue of the supernal spirits, in order that this inferior part of my being, which weighs down the soul (Sap. 9, 15), may prompt me to fulfill thy celestial teachings. I have become burdensome unto myself (Job 7, 20); but with thy intercession and the gracious favor of the Most High I will be able to obey thy will and his with a loving promptitude of heart. Let not thy intercession and support, and the guidance of thy holy and wise counsels ever fail me!

CHAPTER VI.

HONOR DUE TO THE GUARDIAN ANGELS OF THE QUEEN
AND OF THE SOULS.

My daughter, on three different points, I wish to instruct thee in this chapter. The first is that thou, by incessant praise and acknowledgment, show thyself thankful for the favor which God vouchsafed thee in appointing angels to assist thee, teach thee, and guide thee through the tribulations and sorrows. Mortals, in their abominable ingratitude and grossness, ordinarily forget this blessing. They do not consider, what great mercy and condescension of the Most High it is to have ordained these holy princes as helpers, guardians and defenders of men, their earthly fellow creatures so full of miseries and sins. In forgetting how exalted in glory, dignity and beauty these spirits are, many men deprive themselves of numerous blessings, which they would otherwise obtain at the hands of these angels. Greatly do they rouse the indignation of the Lord on this account. Thou, however, my dearest, acknowledge these blessings and give Him thanks with all thy heart.

The second point is, that thou, in every place and at all times, preserve love and reverence toward these holy spirits, as if thou didst see them with thy corporal eyes, and that thou dare not do before them what thou wouldst not do in public. Cease not to exert thyself in the service of God, even as they do and as they require of thee. Remember that they continually see the face of

God (Matth. 17, 10) being of the blessed. Since they at the same time see thee, let there be nothing indecent in thee. Show thyself grateful to them for their vigilance, defense and protection.

Let the third point be, that thou live attentive to the calls, urgings and aspirations, by which these angels seek to rouse thee, move and excite thee to the recollection of the Most High and to the exercise of all the virtues. Be mindful how often they have responded to thy calls, how often they have placed themselves in the way of thy seeking, how often they have solicited for thee signs of the love of the Spouse, kindly reprehending thee for thy carelessness and remissness. When thou didst lose in thy troubles and weariness the guiding star of his light, they renewed hope in thy breast, and patiently corrected thee, directing thy footsteps again into the narrow path of the justifications and testimonies of the Lord. Do not forget, my soul, the greatness of the benefits bestowed upon thee in these angels, for they are above those of many nations and generations: strive to be grateful to thy Lord and to the angels, his ministers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WONDERFUL SILENCE OF THE QUEEN AND HOW IT IS
TO BE IMITATED.

My daughter, he that received more ought to consider himself more needy, since his debt becomes so much the greater. All should humiliate themselves since of themselves they are nothing, nor can they do anything or possess ought. On this account they that are raised up by the hand of the Almighty, should humiliate themselves as mere dust. For, left to themselves and to their nothingness and unworthiness, they should esteem themselves so much the more indebted and bound to thankfulness for that which by themselves they can never repay. Let man acknowledge its condition: for no one can say: I have made myself, I preserve myself in existence, I can prolong my life or postpone death. All his being and preservation is in the hands of the Lord; let each one therefore humble himself in his presence, and thou, my dearest, do not forget these truths.

I wish also that thou esteem as a great treasure the virtue of silence, which I have practiced from my birth. By the light which the Most High gave me, I was conversant with all the virtues; but I attached myself to this one with great predilection, resolving to adhere to it as a companion and as a friend during all my life. Therefore I kept it inviolate, although I could speak from the moment of my entrance into the world. To speak without moderation and forethought is a two-edged sword, which wounds both him that speaks and

him that hears, and thus in two ways destroys charity or hinders it in all the virtues. From this thou canst understand, how much God is offended by the vice of inconsiderate and loose talk, and how justly loquacity, and the tumult of disputation estranges his spirit and veils his presence. For, those that talk much, cannot keep free from grievous sins (Prov. 10, 19). Only with God and with his saints one can speak with security, and even then it must be with forethought and discretion. With creatures it is very difficult to preserve the golden middle, without danger of passing from the correct and necessary to the imperfect and superfluous.

The way to avoid this danger is to tend continually toward the other extreme, striving rather to reflect and be silent. For the prudent medium of speaking only what is necessary, is found more in reflection than in immoderate speech. Remember, my soul, that thou canst not disport thyself in self-sought conversation with creatures without relinquishing God in the secret interior of thy soul; and that which thou canst not do without impudence and insult in thy intercourse with other creatures, thou shouldst not do in thy dealings with thy Lord and the Lord of all. Close thy ears to the deceitful conversations, which might induce thee to speak what thou shouldst not; for it is not just, that thou speak more than what is enjoined thee by thy Lord and Master. Listen to his holy law, which He has, with so liberal a hand, written in thy heart; hear the voice of thy Pastor, and answer Him there, and Him only. I wish to impress thee with the fact, that if thou art to be my disciple and companion, it must be by signaling thyself especially in this virtue of silence. Reflect much, and write this doctrine in thy heart today, and attach thyself more and more to this virtue; for first I wish to

see thee established in this, and then I will teach thee how to speak.

I do not dissuade thee from speaking words of admonition and consolation to thy daughters and thy subjects. Speak also with those, who can give thee tokens of thy Beloved, and who can instruct and inflame thee with his love. In such kind of conversation thou wilt acquire a profitable silence of the soul; since in them is excited a horror and disgust for conversation of men and thou wilt learn to relish conversation about the wished-for eternal Good only. Then with the force of love transforming thy being into that of thy Beloved, the impetus of thy passions will weaken and thou shalt arrive at that kind of sweet martyrdom, which I suffered, when I complained of my body and of mortal life; for they seemed to me a dreary imprisonment which hindered my flight, although not my love. O my daughter, forget all the earthly things in the hiding place of thy silence, and imitate me with all thy fervor and all thy strength; for thus shalt thou arrive at that state, to which thy Spouse invites thee. There thou shalt hear the consoling words, which sustained me in the pangs of my love: "My dove, dilate thy heart, and give admission, my cherished one, to that sweet pain, for my heart is wounded by thy love." Thus the Lord spoke to me, and this thou thyself hast heard repeatedly, for to those that are alone and in silence does his Majesty speak.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DESIRE OF RETIREMENT IN THE QUEEN: A SWEET
EXAMPLE FOR THE SOUL.

My dearest daughter, keep in mind, that all the living are born destined for death, but ignorant of the time allowed them; this they know for certain however, that the term of life is short, that eternity is without end, and that in this life only they can harvest what will yield life or death eternal. In this dangerous pilgrimage of life God has ordained, that no one shall know for certain, whether he is worthy (Eccles. 9, 1) of his love or hate; for if he uses his reason rightly, this uncertainty will urge him to seek with all his powers the friendship of that same Lord. God justifies his cause as soon as the soul acquires the use of reason; for from that time onward He enlightens and urges and guides man toward virtue and draws him away from sin, teaching him to distinguish between water and fire, to approve of the good and reject evil, to choose virtue and repel vice. Moreover, God calls and rouses the soul by his holy inspirations and continual promptings, provides the help of the Sacraments, doctrines and commandments, urges man onward through his angels, preachers, confessors, ministers and teachers, by special tribulations and favors, by the example of strangers, by trials, deaths and other happenings and dispositions of his Providence; He disposes the things of life so as to draw toward Him all men, for He wishes all to be saved. Thus He places at the disposal of the creature a vast field of benevolent

help and assistance, which it can and should use for its own advancement. Opposing all this are the tendencies of the inferior and sensitive nature, infected with the *fomes peccati*, the foment of sin, tending toward sensible objects and by the lower appetites and repugnances, disturbing the reason and enthralling the will in the false liberty of ungoverned desires. The demon also, by his fascinations and his deceitful and iniquitous suggestions obscures the interior light, and hides the deathly poison beneath the pleasant exterior. But the Most High does not immediately forsake his creatures; He renews his mercy and his assistance, recalling them again and again, and if they respond to his first call, He adds others according to his equity, increasing and multiplying them in proportion as the soul corresponds. As a reward of the victory, which the soul wins over itself, the force of his passions and concupiscences is diminished, the spirit is made free to soar higher and rise above its own inclinations and above the demons.

But if man neglects to rise above his low desires and his forgetfulness, he yields to the enemy of God and man. The more he alienates himself from the goodness of God, so much the more unworthy does he become of the secret callings of the Most High, and so much the less does he appreciate his assistance, though it be great. For the demon and the passions have obtained a greater dominion and power over his intellect and have made him more unfit and more incapable of the grace of the Almighty. Thereon, my dear daughter, rests the whole salvation or condemnation of souls, that is, in commencing to admit or resist the advances of the Lord. I desire thee not to forget this doctrine, so that thou mayest respond to the many calls which thou receivest of the Most High. See thou be strong in resisting his ene-

mies and punctually solicitous in fulfilling the pleasure of thy Lord, for thereby thou wilt gratify Him and attend to the commands made known to thee by divine light. I loved my parents dearly, and the tender words of my mother wounded my heart; but as I knew it to be the will of the Lord to leave them, I forgot her house and my people in order to follow my Spouse. The proper education and instruction of children will do much toward making them more free and habituated to the practice of virtue, since thus they will be accustomed to follow the sure and safe guiding star of reason from its first dawn.

BOOK TWO

Lessons given by the Queen of Heaven in connection with the History
of her Life in the Temple and as Spouse of St. Joseph before
the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER I.

MARY IN THE TEMPLE: AN URGENT INVITATION TO WITH-
DRAWAL FROM WORLDLINESS.

My daughter, the greatest happiness, which can befall any soul in this mortal life, is that the Almighty call her to his house consecrated to his service. For by this benefit He rescues the soul from a dangerous slavery and relieves her of the vile servitude of the world, where, deprived of true liberty, she eats her bread in the sweat of her brow. Who is so dull and insipid as not to know the dangers of the worldly life, which is hampered by all the abominable and most wicked laws and customs introduced by the astuteness of the devil and the perversity of men? The better part is religious life and retirement; in it is found security, outside is a torment and a stormy sea, full of sorrow and unhappiness. Through the hardness of their heart and the total forgetfulness of themselves men do not know this truth and are not attracted by its blessings. But thou, O soul, be not deaf to the voice of the Most High, attend and correspond to it in thy actions: I wish to remind thee, that one of the greatest snares of the demon is to counteract

the call of the Lord, whenever he seeks to attract and incline the soul to a life of perfection in his service.

Even by itself, the public and sacred act of receiving the habit and entering religion, although it is not always performed with proper fervor and purity of intention, is enough to rouse the wrath and fury of the infernal dragon and his demons; for they know that this act tends not only to the glory of the Lord and the joy of the holy angels, but that religious life will bring the soul to holiness and perfection. It very often happens, that they who have received the habit with earthly and human motives, are afterwards visited by divine grace, which perfects them and sets all things aright. If this is possible even when the beginning was without a good intention, how much more powerful and efficacious will be the light and influence of grace and the discipline of religious life, when the soul enters under the influence of divine love and with a sincere and earnest desire of finding God, and of serving and loving Him?

Before the Most High reforms or advances those, who for any reason enter the religious state, it is no more than right, that in turning away from the world they avert also their eyes from it and blot out from their memory all its images, forgetting all that they have in so praiseworthy a manner left behind. Those that neglect this requirement and are ungrateful and disloyal toward God, will doubtlessly fall under the punishment of the wife of Lot (Gen. 19, 26), and if on account of the goodness of God they do not suffer this punishment in an equally open and visible manner, they nevertheless undergo it interiorly, remaining congealed and full of dryness, without fervor or advance in virtue. Forsaken by grace they thus do not attain the end of their voca-

tion, make no progress in religion, nor find any spiritual consolation in it, and do not merit to be visited by the Lord as children, but to be left to their own resources like unfaithful and fugitive slaves. Remember, Mary, that for thee all the world must be crucified and dead; that thou must have for it no memory, retain none of its images, pay it no attention, nor have any inclination toward any of its creatures. If sometimes it is necessary to exercise charity with thy neighbors, see that thou ordain it well and that thou safeguard beforehand the good of thy soul, its security and quiet, its interior tranquillity and peace. In these points, as far as is possible without sin, I admonish and command thee to go to the greatest extremes, if thou wishest to remain in my school.

CHAPTER II.

SPECIAL FAVORS OF THE QUEEN POINTING OUT THE RIGHT
USE OF GOD'S GRACES.

My daughter, among the great and ineffable favors of the Omnipotent in the course of my life, was the one which thou has just learned and described; for by this clear vision of the Divinity and of the incomprehensible essence I acquired knowledge of the most hidden sacraments and mysteries, and in this adornment and espousal I received incomparable blessings and felt the sweetest workings of the Divinity in my spirit. My desire to take the four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and enclosure pleased the Lord very much, and I merited thereby that the Godfearing in the Church and in the law of grace are drawn to live under these vows, as is the custom in the present time. This was the beginning of that which you religious practice now, fulfilling the words of David in the forty-fourth psalm: "After Her shall virgins be brought to the King;" for the Lord ordained that my aspirations be the foundation of religious life and of the evangelical law. I fulfilled entirely and perfectly all that I proposed to the Lord, as far as was possible in my state of life; never did I look upon the face of a man, not even on that of my husband Joseph, nor on that of the angels, when they appeared to me in human form, though I saw and knew them all in God. Never did I incline toward any creature, rational or irrational, nor toward any human operation or tendency. But in all things

I was governed by the Most High, either directly by Himself or indirectly through the obedience, to which I freely subjected myself.

Do not forget, my dearest, that the religious state is consecrated and ordained by the Most High for maintaining the doctrine of Christian perfection and the close imitation of the life of my Son, and that therefore the souls, who in religious life are sunk in sleepy forgetfulness of their high blessing and lead a life more listless and lax than many worldly men, are objects of great wrath of the Lord, and a severer judgment and chastisement await them than others. The demon also, ancient and astute serpent as he is, uses more diligence in his attempts to overcome religious men and women, than to conquer all the rest of worldly men; and if one of these religious fall, all hell exerts the greatest solicitude and care to prevent his using the many means which religion affords for rising from a fall, such as obedience and holy exercises and the frequent use of the Sacraments. To make all these remedies miscarry and be of no use to the fallen religious, the enemy applies so many cunning snares that it would fill with terror any one who saw them. However, much of this is recognized in the actions and artifices by which a lax religious soul tries to defend its remissness, excusing it by specious arguments, if it does not break out in disobedience and yet greater disorders and faults.

Be careful therefore, my daughter, and fear so dreadful a danger; by divine assistance of grace raise thyself above thyself, never permitting thy will to consent to any disorderly affection or movement. I wish thee to consume thyself in dying to thy passions and in becoming entirely spiritualized, so that having extinguished within thee all that is of earth, thou mayest come to lead

an angelic life and conversation. In order to deserve the name of spouse of Christ, thou must pass beyond the limits and the sphere of a human being and ascend to another state and divine existence. Although thou art earth, thou must be a blessed earth, without the thorns of passion, one whose fruit is all for the Lord, its Master. If thou hast for thy Spouse that supreme and mighty Lord, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, consider it beneath thy dignity to turn thy eyes, and much more thy heart, toward such vile slaves, as are the human creatures, for even the angels love and respect thee for thy dignity as spouse of the Most High. If even among men it is held to be a daring and boundless insolence in a plebeian to cast longing eyes upon the spouse of a prince, what a crime would it be to cast them on the spouse of the heavenly and omnipotent King? And it would not be a smaller crime if she herself would receive and consent to such familiarity. Consider and assure thyself that the punishment reserved for this sin is inconceivably terrible and I do not show it to thee visibly, lest thou perish in thy weakness. I wish that for thee my instructions suffice to urge thee to the fulfillment of all I admonish and to imitate me as my disciple, as far as thy powers go. Be also solicitous in recalling this instruction to the mind of thy nuns and in seeing that they live up to it.

My Mistress and my most kind Queen, in the joy of my soul I listen to thy sweetest words, so full of spirit and of life, and I wish to inscribe them in the interior of my heart together with the graces of thy most holy Son, which I beseech thee to obtain for me. If Thou give me permission I will speak in thy presence as an ignorant disciple with her Mistress and Teacher. I desire, O my Mother and Protectress, though I am so unworthy and remiss, to fulfill the four vows of my profession accord-

ing to thy commands and according to my obligation, though I am so unworthy and remiss therein; yet I beseech Thee, give me a more full instruction, which may serve me as a guide and direction in the fulfillment of this duty and as a complement of these vows, which Thou hast placed in my heart.

CHAPTER III.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN CONCERNING
THE VOWS OF RELIGION.

My dear daughter, I will not deny thee the instruction thou askest of me with the desire of putting it into practice; but do thou receive it with an appreciative and devout mind, ready to follow it in deed. The wise man says: "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger, thou art ensnared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy own words" (Prov. 6, 12). Accordingly he who has made vows to God has bound his own will; so that he has no freedom of acting except according to the will and direction of Him to whom he has bound himself; for he is chained down by the words of his own mouth uttered in the profession of his vows. Before taking his vows, the choice of his ways was in his own hands; but having once bound and obliged himself, let him know that he has entirely lost his liberty and had delivered himself up to God in his superiors. The whole ruin or salvation of souls depends upon the use of their free will; but since most men use it ill and damn themselves, the Most High has established religious life under the sacred vows. Thus the creature, by once using its liberty to make a perfect and prudent choice, can deliver up to his Majesty that very liberty, which so many pervert, if it remains free and unhampered in its choice.

By these vows the liberty to do evil is happily lost, and the liberty for doing good is assured. It is like a bridle, which leads away from danger and directs into the smooth and sure road. The soul is freed from the

slavery and subjection of the passions, and acquires a new power over them, resuming her place as mistress and queen in the government of her kingdom and remaining subject only to the law of grace and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. If she thus applies her whole will solely to the fulfillment of all that she has promised to God, the holy Spirit will govern and direct all her operations. The creature thereby passes from the condition and state of a slave to that of a child of the Most High, from an earthly to an angelic life, while the corruption and evil effects of sin cannot exert their full power. It is impossible that thou ever be able in this earthly life to calculate or comprehend, what and how many are the blessings and treasures those souls gather for themselves, who with all their powers and affection strive to fulfill perfectly the vows of their profession. For I assure thee, my dearest, that those who are perfect and punctual in their religious obligations can equal and even surpass the martyrs in merit.

My daughter, thou didst happily begin to gather these blessings on the day when thou didst choose the better part; but remember well that thou hast bound thyself to the eternal and mighty God, to whom the inmost secrets of thy heart are manifest. If it is so base and detestable to deceive and disappoint men in just promises, how vile it is to be unfaithful to God in the most just and holy promises? As thy Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, He claims thy gratitude; as Father, thy reverence; as Spouse, thy fidelity; as a Friend, amicable intercourse; as the most Faithful, He should excite thy faith and hope; as the highest and eternal Good, He should possess thy love; as the Almighty, thy entire subjection; as the most just Judge, He should rouse thy humble and holy fear. Against all these allegiances and many others thou

committest perfidious treason, in failing or hesitating to fulfill what thou hast promised according to thy profession. And if in all the nuns who have obliged themselves to a spiritual life and conversation, it is such a monstrous and terrible abomination to call themselves spouses of Christ, while living as members and slaves of the devil, how much more abominable will it be in thee, who hast received more than they all, and therefore shouldst exceed them in loving and exerting thyself to make a return for such incomparable blessings and benefits.

Consider, O soul, how detestable this fault would make thee in the sight of the Lord, of myself, and of the angels and saints. For we all are witnesses of the love and fidelity, which He has shown toward thee as a generous, loving and faithful Spouse. Strive then with all thy heart to avoid offending Him either in great or in small things; do not force Him to relinquish thee and to deliver thee over to the beastly disorders of sin; for thou knowest that this would be a greater misfortune and punishment than if He consign thee to the fury of the elements, or to the wrath of all the wild animals, or even to the rage of the demons. If all these were to execute their anger upon thee, and if the world were to heap upon thee all its punishments and insults, all would do thee less damage than one venial sin against the God whom thou art obliged to serve and love in all things and through all things. Any punishment of this life is less dreadful than sin; for it ends with mortal life, but the guilt of sin, and with it punishment, may be eternal.

In this life any punishment or tribulation fills mortals with fear and dread, merely because it affects the senses and brings them in close touch with it through them, but the guilt of sin does not affect them nor fill them with dread. Men are entirely taken up by that

which is visible, and they therefore do not look upon the ultimate consequences of sin, which is the eternal punishment of hell. Though this is imbibed and inseparably connected with sin, the human heart becomes so heavy and remiss that it remains as if it were stupefied in its wickedness, because it does not feel it present in its senses. Though it could see and feel it by faith, this itself remains listless and dead, as if it were wanting entirely. O most unhappy blindness of mortals! O torpid negligence, that holds so many souls, capable of reason and of glory, oppressed in deceit! There are not words or sentences sufficient to describe this terrible and tremendous danger. My daughter, haste away, and fly with holy fear such an unhappy state, and deliver thyself up to all the troubles and torments of life, which pass soon, rather than incur such a danger; for nothing will be wanting to thee, if thou do not lose God. To be convinced that there are no small faults for thee and for thy state, is a powerful means of saving thyself; fear greatly the small things, for in despising small faults the Most High knows, that the human heart invites other greater ones. That is not a blameless love, which does not avoid all displeasure of the beloved one.

The order which religious souls should maintain in their desires should be: that they strive to be punctual in fulfilling the obligations of their vows and all the virtues, which are connected with them. Afterwards and secondarily they may engage in voluntary practices, such as are called supererogatory. This order some of the souls, who are misled by the devil to entertain an indiscreet zeal for perfection, are wont to invert; thus, while they fail seriously in the obligations of their state, they are eager to add other voluntary exercises and practices, which are usually of small use or benefit, or arise from a

spirit of presumption and singularity. They secretly desire to be looked upon as distinguished in zeal and perfection, while in truth they are very far even from the beginning of perfection. I do not wish to see in thee a fault so reprehensible: but first fulfill all the duties of thy vows and of community life, and then thou mayest add what thou canst, according to thy ability and the inspiration of divine grace. This together will beautify thy soul and will make it perfect and agreeable in the eyes of God.

The vow of obedience is the principal one in religion; for it implies a total renunciation and denial of one's will. By it the religious renounces all jurisdiction or right to say for himself: I will or I will not, I shall or I shall not act: all this he throws aside and renounces by obedience, delivering himself into the hands of his superior. In order to fulfill this obligation it is necessary for thee not to be wise in thy own conceit, not to imagine thyself still mistress of thy likings, thy desires, or thy opinion; for true obedience must be of the quality of faith, so that the commands of the superior are esteemed, revered and put into execution, without any pretense of examination or criticism. Accordingly, in order to obey, thou must consider thyself without opinion, without life of thy own, without right of speech; but thou must allow thyself to be moved and governed like a corpse, alive only in order to execute devotedly all that the superior desires. Never discuss within thyself whether thou shouldst fulfill his commands or not, but only consider how thou canst best execute that which is commanded. Sacrifice thy own inclination and repress all thy appetites and passions; and when by this efficacious determination thou art dead to all the movements of self, let obedience be the soul and the life of thy works. To the will of thy superior thou

must conform all thy own, with all its activity in all thy words and works; let it be thy prayer, to be able to quit thy own being and receive another new one, so that nothing be thine and all in thee be of obedience without contradiction or resistance.

Remember that the most perfect manner of obeying is to avoid offending the superior by showing that you disagree with him. He should find a willing obedience, convincing him that his commands are obeyed promptly, without objection or murmur, either in words or by any other signs. The superiors take the place of God, and he who obeys his superiors, obeys the Lord himself, who is in them and governs them and enlightens them, so that their commands will be for the salvation of souls. The contempt shown to superiors passes on to God himself, who through them manifests and makes known his will (Luke 10, 16). Thou must persuade thyself, that the Lord moves them to speak, and that it is the word of the Omnipotent himself. My daughter, strive to be obedient in order that thou mayest speak of victories (Prov. 21, 28); do not fear to obey, for that is the secure path; so secure, that God will not bring to account the errors of the obedient on the day of judgment, but He will rather blot out other sins in consideration of the sacrifice made in obedience. My most holy Son offered his precious sufferings and death in special love for the obedient, and procured for them special rights in regard to mercy and grace, and special privileges toward the success and perfection of all that is due under obedience. Even now, in order to appease Him, He reminds the eternal Father of his obedience unto death and unto the cross (Phil. 2, 8), and so the Father is placated toward men. Because He was pleased with the obedience of Abraham and his son Isaac, He held Himself obliged not only to save Isaac

from death, who showed himself so obedient, but to make him the ancestor of the incarnate Word and to designate him as the head and beginning of the great blessings.

The vow of poverty is a generous renunciation and detachment from the heavy burden of temporal things. It is an alleviation of the spirit, it is a relief afforded to human infirmity, the liberty of a noble heart to strive after eternal and spiritual blessings. It is a satiety and abundance, in which the thirst after earthly treasures is allayed, and a sovereignty and ownership, in which a most noble enjoyment of all riches is established. All this, my daughter, and many other blessings are contained in voluntary poverty, and all this the sons of the world are ignorant and deprived of, precisely because they are lovers of earthly riches and enemies of this holy and opulent poverty. They do not consider, although they feel and suffer, the heavy weight of riches, which pins them to the earth and drives them into its very bowels to seek gold and silver in great anxiety, sleeplessness, labors and sweat, as if they were not men, but wild beasts that know not what they are suffering and doing. And if they are thus weighed down before acquiring riches, how much more when they have come into their possession? Let the countless hosts that have fallen into hell with their burden, proclaim it; let their incalculable anxieties of preserving their riches, and much more, let the intolerable laws, which riches and those that possess them have foisted upon the world, testify what is required to retain them!

If, on the one hand, possessions throttle the spirit and tyrannically oppress it in its weakness, if they suppress the soul's most noble privilege of following eternal goods and God himself: it is certain on the other hand, that voluntary poverty restores to man the nobility of his condition and, liberating him from vile servitude and reinstat-

ing him his noble freedom and mastery of all things. The soul is never more a mistress than when she despises them, and only then has she the more firm possession and makes the more excellent use of riches, when she gives them away or leaves them of her own free will; only then her appetite for them is best satiated, when she does not care to possess them. Then above all is the heart set free and made capable of the treasures of the Divinity, for which it is furnished by the Creator with almost infinite capacity.

My daughter,. I wish thee to study diligently this divine philosophy and science, which the world forgets, and not only the world, but also many religious souls, who have promised it to God. Great is the divine wrath on account of this fault, and suddenly will the infringers of this vow receive heavy and unexpected punishment. By setting aside their voluntary poverty, they have alienated from themselves the spirit of Christ, my most holy Son, and all that We have come to teach men in abnegation and poverty. Although they do not now feel it, because the Judge delays and they enjoy the abundance which they desire, yet in the judgment they will find themselves overwhelmed and dismayed by the rigor of their punishment, greater than they ever expected, considered or imagined in their forgetfulness of divine justice.

The temporal goods are created by the Most High for the sole purpose of sustaining life; having attained this end, the need of them ceases. And as this need is limited, soon and easily satisfied, there is no reason that the care for the immortal soul should be only fitful and temporary, while the hunger after riches should be so perpetual and unintermitting, as it has come to be among men. It is the height of perverseness for man to mix up the end and the means in an affair so important and urgent, that he devote all his time, all his care, all the exertion of his

powers and all the alertness of his mind to the life of his body, of which he knows not the duration nor the end, and that on the other hand, in many years of his existence he spare for his poor soul only one hour, and that very often the last and the worst one of his whole life.

Make use therefore, my dearest daughter, of the true enlightenment, by which the Most High has undeceived thee in regard to such a dangerous error. Renounce all affection or inclination for earthly things; even under the pretext of the necessity and poverty of thy convent do not be oversolicitous to procure the things used for the sustenance of life. In exerting ordinary care, let it be such as will not disturb thee, when thou failest to obtain what thou desirest, and let it be without inordinate affection, even when thou seekest it for the service of God: for thou must know, that thy love of God shall be so much the less, as the number of things thou lovest together with Him is greater. Great possessions thou must renounce as superfluous; thou dost not need them and it is a crime to keep them for no purpose; the little thou standst in need of should also be esteemed but little; for it would be a great error to embarrass the heart with that which is of no account and can hinder it much. If thou hast all that according to thy judgment is necessary for human wants, thou art not in reality poor; for to be poor properly and strictly means to have less than what is necessary. Those, to whom nothing is wanting, call themselves rich. To possess more than is necessary creates unrest and affliction of spirit; to desire and look for what is not used will be a poverty without quiet or satisfaction.

I require of thee such a freedom of spirit, as not to attach thyself to anything, be it great or small, superfluous or necessary. Of the things that are necessary for human life, accept only so much, as is needed to prevent

death or indecency. Let this latter be of the poorest and of such as is patched up sufficient to cover thee, and in thy nourishment seek what is most coarse, without satisfying thy particular whims of taste, but asking for what is insipid and tasteless, so that on purpose thou mayst be served with what is disagreeable and be deprived of what the appetite craves, thus seeking in all things the greatest perfection.

The vow of chastity includes purity of body and soul; this is easily lost, and it is difficult, sometimes, according to the manner of losing it, even impossible to repair. This great treasure is deposited in a castle, which has many portals and openings, and if these are not all well guarded and defended, the treasure is without security. My daughter, in order to preserve perfectly this vow, it is necessary to make an inviolable pact with thy senses, not to use them, except for what is according to the dictates of reason and for the glory of the Creator. After once the senses are mortified, it will be easy to overcome thy enemies, for only through them can they conquer thee; for no thoughts can recur, or be awakened to activity, unless fomented and excited by the images and impressions admitted through the exterior senses. Thou shouldst not touch, nor look upon, nor speak to any person of whatever condition, whether man or woman, so as to let their images or resemblances find entrance into thy imagination. This carefulness, which I enjoin, will be the guard of the purity, which I require of thee. If on account of charity or obedience thou must converse with them (for only these virtues are sufficient causes for conversing with creatures), do it with all gravity, modesty and reserve.

In regard to thy own person live as if thou wert a pilgrim and stranger in this world; be poor, mortified,

laborious, loving the hardship connected with temporal things, without expecting alleviation or enjoyment, as one who is absent from her home and her country, enlisted to work and battle against powerful foes. Since the flesh is the center of weakness and danger, it is proper that thou carefully resist thy natural likings, and through them the temptations of the demons. Raise thyself above thyself, and seek a habitation far above all that is earthly in order that thou mayest live under the shadow of Him, whom thou desirest (Cant. 2, 3) and in his protection thou shalt enjoy tranquillity and true refreshment. Deliver thyself over with thy whole heart to his chaste and holy love, without attending to any creatures, except in so far as they may help and oblige thee to love and serve thy Creator; in all other respects abhor them.

Although no virtue should be wanting in her, who professes herself, and is entitled to call herself, a spouse of Christ; yet it is the virtue of chastity which makes her most worthy and like to her Spouse. For it is chastity, which makes her spiritual and withdraws her from earthly corruption, elevating her to angelic life and to a certain resemblance of God himself. This virtue beautifies and adorns all the rest, raises the body to a higher existence, enlightens the mind and preserves in the soul a nobility above all that is corruptible. Because this virtue was in an especial fruit of the Redemption, merited by my Son on the Cross, where He paid for the sins of the world, therefore holy Scripture expressly mentions that virgins accompany and follow the Lamb (Apoc. 14, 4).

The vow of enclosure is the wall of chastity and of all virtues, the preserve where they are nourished and expanded: it is a privilege granted by heaven to the spouses of Christ in religion, dispensing them from the burdensome and dangerous tribute, which the freedom of the

world pays to the ruler of its vanities. By this vow the religious live as in a secure port, while other souls navigate and are tossed about in the storms of a dangerous sea. With so many advantages enclosure cannot be considered as a confinement in a narrow space, for in it are offered to the religious the spacious fields of virtue, of the knowledge of God, of his infinite perfections, of his mysteries, and of his benefits conferred on man. On such spacious grounds can a nun, recreate and enjoy herself; and only when she fails in this enjoyment, does she begin to feel narrow confinement in this, the greatest freedom. For thee, my daughter, let there be no other playground, nor do I wish to see thee confine thyself to so narrow limits as even the whole visible world. Rise up to the height of the knowledge and love of God, where there are no limits or confines to hold thee, and where thou canst live in unbounded liberty. From that eminence thou wilt see how small, vile and despicable is all that is created, and how much too narrow it is to hold thy soul.

To the necessary enclosure of the body add also the restrictions of the senses, in order that, imbued with fortitude, they may preserve for thee interior purity, and through it keep ablaze the fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6, 12) which thou must continue to nourish and watch lest it be extinguished. In order to better guard the senses and profit from the vow of enclosure, do not approach the portals, nor the speaking-grate, nor the windows, and do not even remember that the convent is furnished therewith, unless it is required by some particular office or by obedience. Desire nothing, and therefore strive after nothing, and do not exert thyself for that, which is not allowed thee to desire. In retirement, solitude and circumspection wilt thou find thy peace. Thereby wilt thou give me pleasure, and merit for thyself copious fruit and the reward of love and grace, which thou desirest.

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEEN'S LIFE IN THE TEMPLE, SHOWING HOW
NECESSARY PERFECTION IS IN THE SMALL AND
ORDINARY DUTIES OF ONE'S STATE.

I will relate that, which the Most High explained to me on one occasion in his own words:

"The works of Her, who was to be the Mother of the Godman, were altogether and in every way most perfect, and even to understand them exceeds the capacity of all human creatures and of the angels. Her interior acts of the virtues were so precious and of such great merit and favor, that they surpass all that the seraphim can do; and thou, my soul, wilt much better understand, than be able to explain them with words of thy tongue. But it is my will, that during thy pilgrimage in thy mortal body thou place most holy Mary as the beginning of thy joy, and that thou follow Her through the desert of renunciation and abnegation of all that is human and visible. Follow Her by a perfect imitation according to the measure of thy strength and of the light which thou receivest. Let Her be thy guiding star and thy Directress: She will manifest to thee my will and will let thee find my holy law which is written in Her by the power of my right hand: meditate upon it day and night. She by her intercession will strike the rock of Christ's humanity (Num. 220, 11), in order that in this desert may abound the waters of divine grace and light, so that thy thirst may be quenched, thy understanding enlightened, and thy will inflamed. She will be a pillar of light to illuminate thy

path (Exod. 12, 21) and a cloud to afford thee shade and refreshment against the ardors of thy passions and the fierceness of thy enemies."

"Thou wilt have in Her an angel, who will guard and guide thee, and (Exod. 13, 21) lead thee away from the dangers of Babylon and of Sodom, so that my punishment shall not reach thee. Thou wilt have in Her a Mother to love thee, a Friend to counsel thee, a Mistress to direct thee, a Protectress to shield thee and a Queen whom thou canst serve and obey as a handmaid. In the virtues, which this Mother of the Onlybegotten exercised in the temple, thou wilt find a summary of all the highest perfections according to which thou shouldst arrange thy life; an exact and reliable copy of all her sanctity; the beauty of virginity, the loveliness of humility, the utmost promptness in devotion and obedience, the steadfastness of faith, the certitude of hope, the fire of love and the most complete outline map of all the wonders of my right hand. According to this rule thou must regulate thy life, by this mirror thou must arrange and adorn it, adding to the beauty and grace of a bride that wishes to enter into the chamber of her Spouse and Lord."

"If the nobility and condition of the teacher are a spur to the disciple and tend to make his doctrine more acceptable, who can attract thee more powerfully than thy Instructress, who is the Mother of thy Spouse, chosen as the most pure and holy among women, and without blemish of sin, being at the same time a Virgin and the Mother of the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father, the splendor of his Divinity in his own essence? Hear then this sovereign Mistress; follow Her in close imitation, and meditate without ceasing upon her admirable excellence and virtues. Remember, that the life and conversation She led in the temple is the original, which all the souls, that con-

secrete themselves after Her as spouses of Christ, must copy within themselves."

My daughter, human nature is imperfect and remiss in practicing virtue, and easily weakens in its exercise; for it continually seeks rest and evades labor with all its might. When the soul listens to and extemporizes with the animal and carnal part of its nature this latter will engross and overcome the forces of reason and of the spirit, and will reduce them to a dangerous and shameful slavery. This disorder is abominable and much to be feared by all; but God abhors it without comparison more in his ministers and in religious: they, as a matter of course, are supposed to be perfect, and therefore are injured so much the more seriously, if they do not come out victorious in the conflict of the passions. By remissness in battle and by their frequent defeats they live themselves into a paralyzing and self-satisfied conviction of false security, content with the performance of certain easy outward practices of virtue, at the same time imagining (without the least real advancement) that they are moving mountains. The demon then introduces other distractions and temptations, and on account of their small appreciation of the rules and practices of religion, they begin to weaken in all of them, esteem them as light and unimportant matter, and, living on in their false security, come to lose the very perception of true virtue.

I desire that thou, my daughter, guard against this error. Remember, that a voluntary remissness in regard to one imperfection prepares and opens the way for others: these facilitate the commission of venial sins, these again of mortal sins. Thus the descent is from one abyss to another, until the bottom is found in the disregard of all evil. In order to prevent such a misfortune it is necessary to intercept from afar the current of sin, for the prac-

tice or ceremony, which seems but small, is an outwork which keeps the enemy at a distance, while the precepts and laws concerning more important matters are the fortress walls of conscience. If the demon can break through and gain the outer defenses, he is in better position to gain the inner ones. If then an opening is made in the bulwarks by the commission of sin, although it may not be a very grievous one, he already has a better opportunity to make an assault on the interior reign of a soul. As the soul finds herself weakened by vicious acts and habits and without strength of grace, she does not resist the attack with fortitude, and the devil, acquiring more and more power over her, begins to subject and oppress her without opposition.

Consider therefore now, my dearest, how great must be thy watchfulness, and how great is the necessity of not falling asleep in the midst of so many dangers. Remember that thou art a religious, a spouse of Christ, a superior, taught and enlightened, favored with so many singular blessings. By these privileges and many others, which thou wilt find connected with them, thou shouldst gage thy solicitude, for thou owest a return and correspondence in all of them to the Lord. Exert thyself to be punctual in the fulfillment of all the rules and practices of religion; let there be no rule, no command, and no exercise of perfection, which ever will seem small to thee; despise or forget none of them; observe them all with rigor, for in the eyes of God all is precious and of great import when practiced according to his pleasure. It is certain, that He finds pleasure in seeing his commands fulfilled, and is offended in seeing them set aside. Therefore in all things consider, that thou hast a Spouse, whom thou must please, a God, whom thou must serve, a Father, whom thou must obey, a Judge, whom thou must fear, and a Mistress, whom thou shouldst imitate and follow.

In order that thou mayest fulfill all this, thou must renew in thy soul the strong resolution not to listen to thy inclinations, not to yield to the negligence and weakness of thy nature; do not omit any practice or exercise on account of its difficulty, as for instance kissing the ground, as thou has been accustomed to do according to the custom of the religious. Both small and great perform with a loving constancy and thus thou wilt be pleasing in the eyes of my Son and myself. In the works of supererogation, after praying for a holy alacrity, ask advice of thy confessor and superior, and perform them with a spirit entirely free of any predilection or selflove. That which they direct, accept and write in thy heart, never resting in its punctual fulfillment. If it is possible to avail thyself of obedience and counsel, never decide for thyself on anything, how good soever it may appear to thee; for the true will of God is always manifest in holy obedience.

CHAPTER V.

PROGRESS IN VIRTUE AND PERFECTION INCULCATED BY THE
EXAMPLE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

My daughter, the Most High communicates to all mortals without distinction the light of the natural virtues; to those who dispose themselves by means of them and by his graces, He concedes also the infused virtues at the time of their justification. As He is the Author of nature and of grace, He distributes these gifts with greater or less abundance, according to his equity and pleasure. In Baptism He instills the virtues of faith, hope and charity, and with these, other virtues, by which the creature is to co-operate and exert itself toward the pursuit of Good, not only preserving within itself those received in the sacraments, but acquiring others by its own merits and exertions. This will be the greatest happiness and blessedness of men, that they correspond to the love, which the Creator and Redeemer shows them, adorning their soul and, by the infused habits, familiarizing themselves with the virtuous exercise of their own will. But the failure to correspond to those inestimable benefits brings on their greatest misfortune, because in this disloyalty consists the first great victory of the demon over man.

Of thee, my soul, I require that thou exercise thyself and co-operate with the natural and the supernatural, gifts of virtue with an unceasing diligence, and that thou acquire the habits of other virtues, which thou shouldst augment by the frequent exercise of those, which

God so liberally and graciously has communicated to thee. The infused gifts, joined to the virtues nurtured and attained by the soul itself, are an adornment and acquisition of marvelous beauty, and very pleasing in the eyes of the Most High. I remind thee also, my dearest, that the Almighty has been so generous in conferring these blessings on thy soul and has enriched it with such great treasures of grace, that if thou shouldst fall into disgrace, it would be thy fault, and thou wouldst incur a greater guilt, than many generations of men. Consider and always remember the great nobility of virtue, how it so enlightens and beautifies the soul, that even if there were no other gain or object, the desire of possessing it for its own sake would be entirely justifiable. Now, that which exalts virtue beyond all comparison is, that its final end is God himself, for whom truth and perfection, which are its constituents, must be primarily intended; and as soon as virtues attain this their end, namely God himself, they will be the foundation of the happiness and blessedness of the creature.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VIRTUE OF FAITH.

My daughter, the inestimable treasure of the virtue of divine faith is hidden to those mortals who have only carnal and earthly eyes; for they do not know how to appreciate and esteem a gift and blessing of such incomparable value. Consider, my dearest, what the world was without faith and what it would be today if my Son and Lord would not preserve faith. How many men whom the world has celebrated as great, powerful and wise have precipitated themselves, on account of the want of light of faith, from the darkness of their unbelief into most abominable sins, and thence into the eternal darkness of hell! How many kingdoms and provinces, being blind themselves, follow these still more blind leaders until they together fall into the abyss of eternal pains! And they are followed by the bad Christians, who having received the grace and blessing of faith, live as if they had it not in their hearts.

Do not forget, my dear friend, to be thankful for this precious jewel which the Lord has given thee as a dower and a wedding gift of thy espousal with Him, in order to draw thee to the bridal chamber of his holy Church and afterwards to have intercourse with Him in the eternal beatitude. Continually exercise this virtue of faith, for it places thee near to thy last end, after which thou strivest, and brings thee near to the object of thy desires and thy love. Faith teaches the sure way of eternal salvation, faith is the light that shines in the darkness of

this mortal life and pilgrimage; it leads men securely to the possession of the fatherland to which they are way-faring, if they do not allow it to die out by infidelity and sinfulness. Faith enlivens the other virtues and serves as a nourishment of the just man and a support in his labors. Faith confounds and fills with fear the infidels and the lax Christians in their negligence; for it convinces them in this world of their sin and threatens punishment in the life to come. Faith is powerful to do all things, for nothing is impossible to the believer; faith makes all things attainable and possible. Faith illumines and ennobles the understanding of man, since it directs him in the darkness of his natural ignorance, not to stray from the way, and it elevates him above himself so that he sees and understands with infallible certainty what is far above his powers and assures him of it no less than if he saw it clearly before him. He is thus freed from the gross and vile narrow-mindedness of those who will believe only what they can experience by their own limited natural powers, not considering that the soul, as long as it lives in the prison of this corruptible body, is very much circumscribed and limited in its sphere of action by the knowledge drawn from the coarse activity of the senses. Appreciate, therefore, my daughter, this priceless treasure of the Catholic faith given thee by God, watch over it and practice it in great esteem and reverence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VIRTUE OF HOPE.

My daughter, as with two indefatigable wings, my spirit raised its flight by means of faith and hope toward the endless and the highest good, until it rested in union with God through intimate and perfect love. Many times I tasted and enjoyed the clear vision and fruition of Him; but as these blessings were not continuous in my state of pilgrimage, I supplied their place by the exercise of faith and hope. They remained with me during my visions and fruitions and immediately became active during their absence, preventing any cessation in my high aspirations. The effects of these virtues, the love, the efforts and the desires which they excited in my soul toward the possession of the eternal fruition of God, cannot be adequately comprehended by the created mind in its present limited state, but they shall be known in God and cause eternal praise in those who will be worthy to see Him in heaven.

Thou, my dearest, having received such great enlightenment concerning the excellence of this virtue and the works which I practiced by its help, shouldst work without ceasing to imitate me according to the assistance of divine grace. Renew continually and confer within thyself the promises of the Most High and, with unshaken confidence in their divine truthfulness, raise thy heart to ardent desires and longings for their attainment. In this firm hope thou canst assure thyself of arriving

through the merits of my most holy Son, at the blessed cohabitation in the celestial fatherland and at the companionship of all those who there see in immortal glory the face of the Most High. With its help thou canst raise thy heart above earthly things and fix thy mind upon the immutable Good, to which thou aspiest; all visible things will appear to thee burdensome and disagreeable, and thou wilt esteem them as vile and contemptible; nothing wilt thou strive after except that most lovable and delightful object of thy desires. In my soul there was an ardor of hope, such as is possible only to those who have apprehended its object in faith and tasted it by experience; no tongue and no words can describe or express its intensity.

Besides, in order to spur thee on still more, consider and deplore with heartfelt sorrow the unhappiness of so many souls who are images of God and capable of his glory, and who through their own fault are deprived of the true hope of enjoying it. If the children of the holy Church would pause in their vain occupations and would take time to consider and weigh the blessings of unerring faith and hope, which separates them from darkness and which, without their merit, distinguishes them from the followers of blind unbelief, they would without doubt be ashamed of their torpid forgetfulness and repudiate their vile ingratitude. But let them be undeceived, for most terrible punishments await them; they are most detestable in the sight of God and the saints, because they despise the blood shed by Christ for the very purpose of gaining them these blessings. As if all were only a fiction they treat with contempt the blessings of truth, hastening about during their whole life without

spending even one day, and many of them not even an hour, in the consideration of their duties and of their danger. Weep, O soul, over this lamentable evil, and according to thy power work and pray for its extirpation through my most holy Son. Believe me that whatever exertion and attempt thou makest toward this purpose shall be rewarded by his Majesty.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY.

My daughter, if I desire in maternal affection, that thou follow me and imitate me in all the other virtues, then more especially do I make known and declare to thee my desire to see thee follow me in the virtue of charity, for this is the end and the crowning glory of all other virtues. I desire that thou exert thy utmost powers to copy in thy soul, with the greatest perfection, all that thou hast learnt of my charity. Light up the lamp of thy faith and reason in order to find this drachm of infinite value, and after thou hast (Luke 15, 8) found it, forget and despise all that is earthly and corruptible. In thy own mind consider again and again, ponder and take heed of the infinite reasons and causes that make God lovable above all other things. In order that thou mayest be sure that thou lovest Him perfectly and truly, search within thyself for the following signs and effects of that love; whether thy thought and meditation dwell continually on God, whether his commands and counsel find in thee no repugnance or remissness, whether thou fearest to offend Him, whether thou seekest immediately to appease Him after having offended Him, whether thou grieveest to see Him offended and rejoicest to see Him served by all creatures, whether thou desirest and art delighted to speak continually of his love; see whether thou delightest in the memory of his presence, whether thou grieveest at thy forgetfulness of Him and at his absence from thee, whether thou lovest what He loves, and ab-

horrest what He abhors, whether thou seekest to draw all men towards his friendship and grace, whether thou prayest with confidence; see whether thou receivest with gratitude his benefits, whether thou dost not waste them but rather turnst them to good account for his honor and glory, whether thou strivest to extinguish in thyself all the movements of the passions, which retard thee or hinder thee in thy loving aspirations and in thy works of virtue.

All these and many more are the signs of greater or less charity in the soul. When charity is ardent and strong, it will be especially careful not to suffer the forces of the soul to remain idle, nor to consent to any blemish, because it will immediately consume and wipe it out. It will not rest until it can taste the highest Good of its love. For without it, this love droops, is wounded and dies. It thirsts after that wine which inebriates the heart, causing a forgetfulness of all that is corruptible and passing (Cant. 5, 1). And as charity is the mother and the root of all virtue, its fecundity will immediately show itself as soon as it has found a place in the soul; it will fill it and adorn it with the habits of the other virtues, and engender them one after another by establishing the practice of them, as the Apostle says (I Cor. 13, 4). The soul that is in charity not only feels the effects of charity in itself, but through charity it is secure of being loved by God; through this divine love, it enjoys the reciprocal effect of God's indwelling, so that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost will come and live in it as their temple, and this is a blessing which no words and no example can properly express in this mortal life.

The right order of this virtue is to love God above all the creatures, then to love oneself, and him who is nearest to oneself, namely, our neighbor. God must be

loved with the whole understanding, without deceit, with the whole will, without reserve or division, with the whole mind, without forgetfulness, without diminution, without negligence or remissness. The motive of charity in loving God is none else than God Himself; for He must be loved for his own sake, being the highest Good and most perfect goodness and holiness. Loving God for such motives causes the creature to love itself and the neighbor and itself; for both belong to one and the same God, from whom they derive their origin, their life and activity. He that loves God truly for Himself will also love all that is of God and all that in some way participates in his goodness. Therefore charity looks upon the neighbor as a work and a participation of God and makes no distinction between friend or enemy. Charity looks only upon that which is of God and which pertains to Him in others, no matter whether the neighbor is friendly or hostile, a benefactor or a persecutor. It attends only to the difference in the participation of the divine and infinite goodness and according to this standard it loves all in God and for God.

All other kinds of love, such as loving creatures for less exalted motives, hoping for some kind of reward, advantage or return, or loving them under cover of disorderly concupiscence, or with a mere human and natural love, even if it should spring from naturally virtuous and well ordered motives, are not infused charity. As it is usual in men to be moved by these partial excellences and for selfish and earthly ends, there are few who embrace and appreciate the nobility of this generous virtue and who exercise it with proper perfection. For they seek even God and pursue Him, for the sake of temporal blessings, or for spiritual benefits and pleasures. I desire that thou, my daughter, drive out of thy heart all

these disorderly loves, and that thou live only in well ordered charity, to which the Most High has inclined thy desires. If thou so many times reaffirmest that this virtue is so beautiful, so pleasing and so worthy of being sought and esteemed by all creatures, apply thyself to know it in its full excellence; and having come to understand its value, set thyself to purchase this incomparable gem by forgetting and extinguishing in thy heart all love that is not the perfect love. Love no creatures except for God, and for what thou seest in them as coming from God and belonging to Him, in the same manner as a bride loves all the servants and connections of the house of her bridegroom because they are his. Forget to love anything not referable to God or not lovable on his account, nor love in any other way except as I have asked thee or the Most High has commanded thee to love. Thou wilt also know whether thou lovest with pure charity, by thy behavior towards friends and enemies, the naturally agreeable and disagreeable, the polite and the impolite, those that possess or do not possess natural advantages. All this sort of distinction does not come from pure charity, but from the natural inclinations and passions of the appetites, which thou must govern, extinguish and eradicate by means of this sublime virtue.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE.

My daughter, I wish, that all that thou hast written and that thou hast understood in this chapter, be to thee an instruction and a reminder of what, I have taught thee for the government of thy actions. Write in thy heart and fix in thy mind the memory of all that thou hast learnt of my prudence in all that I have thought, desired and executed. Let this light guide thee through the midst of the darkness of human ignorance, so that thou mayst not be disturbed or confounded by the luring passions, nor especially by the malice and snares laid thee by the watchful malice of thy enemies, seeking to infect thy understanding. Not to be endowed with all the perfections of prudence, is not culpable in the creature; but to be negligent in learning the rules of prudence after having been instructed how to attain this knowledge, is a serious fault and the cause of many mistakes and errors in the conduct of affairs. On account of this negligence the passions countermand, impede, and obstruct the dictates of prudence. This is especially the case with disorderly sorrow and excessive enjoyment, which are apt to pervert the just estimation of good or bad. Thence arise two dangerous vices: precipitation in our actions, impelling us to undertake things without considering the proper means of success, and inconstancy in our good resolutions and in the works once begun. Ungoverned anger or indiscreet fervor, both cause us to be precipitate or remiss in many of our

exterior actions, because they are performed without proper moderation and counsel. Hasty judgment and want of firmness in pursuing the good, cause the soul imprudently to desist from its laudable enterprise; for it gives easy admittance to that, which is opposed to the true good, and is highly pleased, now with the true goodness, then again with what is but apparent and deceitful or is presented by the passions or by the demon.

Against all these dangers I wish to see thee watchful and provident; and thou wilt be so, if thou attend to the example, which I gave thee in my life, and if thou obey the instructions and counsels of thy spiritual guides; for without them thou must do nothing, if thou wishest to proceed with docile discretion. Be assured, that the Most High will give thee plentiful wisdom; for a pure submissive and docile heart will draw from Him superabundant aid. Keep in mind always the misfortune of the imprudent and foolish virgins, who, in their thoughtless negligence, rejected wise counsel and cast aside fear, instead of being solicitous; and when afterwards they sought to make up for it, they found the portal of salvation closed against them (Matth. 25, 12). See to it, therefore, my daughter, that thou unite the simplicity of the dove with the prudence of the serpent, and then thy works shall be perfect.

CHAPTER X.

THE VIRTUE OF JUSTICE.

In this extensive virtue of Justice, my daughter, although thou hast been taught much of its value, thou still art ignorant of the greater part of it on account of thy condition in this state of mortality; and therefore also this thy account of it is insufficient for a full understanding of its excellence. Nevertheless thou hast in it a copious summary to direct thy intercourse with creatures and thy worship of the Most High. In regard to this latter I remind thee, my dearest, that the supreme majesty of the Omnipotent is highly indignant at the offenses of mortals, who forget the veneration, adoration, and reverence due to Him. If some of them do render it, it is so coarse, inattentive and discourteous, that they do not merit reward but chastisement. They revere and adore profoundly the princes and magnates of the earth; they ask favors and seek to obtain them with the utmost diligence; they are effusive in their thanks, when they succeed, protesting their lifelong gratitude. But the supreme Lord, who gives them being, life and activity, who preserves and sustains them, who has redeemed them and raised them to the dignity of sons, who wishes to confer upon them his own glory, who is in Himself the infinite and the highest Good; Him, the highest Majesty, they forget, because they cannot see Him with their corporal eyes. As if not all good came from Him, they return, at the highest, merely a sluggish remembrance and a hasty thanksgiving. I will not even mention at present, how much those offend

the most just Ruler of the universe, who wickedly break through and overturn all the order of justice toward their neighbor, perverting the whole natural order in wishing to their brothers, what they would not wish for themselves.

Abhor, my daughter, such execrable conduct, and as far as thy forces will allow, make up by thy works for this want of acknowledgment in the service of the Most High. And as by thy state of life thou art consecrated to the divine worship, let that be thy principal occupation and delight, striving to imitate the angelic spirits in their ceaseless fear and worship of the Lord. Preserve reverence for holy things, including also the ornaments and sacred vessels used in divine service. During divine office, prayer, and sacrifice see that thou remain on thy knees; implore with faith and receive his favors with humble thanksgiving; the same consideration thou shouldst show also to all men, even if they offend thee. To all be kind, affable, meek, simple and truthful; without deceit or double-dealing, without detraction or illwill, without rash judgment of thy neighbor. And in order that thou mayst fulfill all justice, revive the memory of it constantly and desire to do to thy neighbor that which thou wishest done to thyself. Especially remember how my most holy Son, and I in imitation of Him, acted toward all men.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE.

My daughter, if thou seekest attentively to obtain a full understanding of the excellence and the propriety of the virtue of fortitude, as is my wish, thou shalt come into the possession of a most efficient check for the guiding of thy irascible affections; for these are the passions, which are most easily moved to action and are most apt to overstep the bounds of reason. Thou shalt also have the means of attaining to the utmost greatness and perfection of virtue, which thou desirest, and of resisting and overcoming all the machinations of thy enemies, who seek to intimidate thee in the pursuit of what is hard in perfection. But understand, my dearest, that the irascible in thy nature assists the concupiscible by opposing what is hostile to the object sought after by the concupiscible powers. On this account the irascible will deteriorate much faster than the concupiscible as soon as the concupiscible affections become disordered and begin to love what is only apparently good or what is vicious. In place of a virtuous fortitude many execrable and deformed vices will then result. This will also teach thee that disorderly love of one's own excellence and distinction, and vainglory, which are the sources of pride and vanity, will breed many vices peculiar to the irascible passions, such as discords, contentions, quarrels, boasting, strife, impatience, obstinacy; moreover also vices peculiar to the concupiscible passions, such as hypocrisy, lying, vain strivings, curiosity and the

desire to appear more than is befitting to a creature, and to conceal the meanness which truly belongs to one who has committed sins. From all these contemptible vices thou shalt keep thyself free, if thou wilt earnestly mortify and restrain the inordinate movements of concupiscence by virtue of temperance, which I will now teach thee. For when thou strivest after that which is just and useful, although thou must make use of fortitude and of the well-ordered irascible passions, it must always be done in such a way as not to pass the proper bounds; and there is continual danger of allowing oneself to be carried away by inordinate zeal for virtue, when one is subject to self-love or any disorderly love. Sometimes this vice disguises itself and hides under the cloak of a pious zeal, and its victims, anxious to appear zealous for God and the good of their neighbor, are in reality deceived and ensnared into anger by selfish motives. On this account the patience, which is founded in charity and which is accompanied by generosity and magnanimity, is very honorable, estimable and necessary; for he that really loves the highest and truest Good, easily bears the loss of apparent honor and glory, despising it with magnanimity as vile and contemptible. Even when it is freely given by his fellow creatures, the magnanimous will set no value on it; he will show himself invincible and constant in all his undertakings. Thus he will advance, according to his opportunities, in the virtues of perseverance and patience.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE.

My daughter, thou hast said something of the virtue of temperance and of my practice of it, so far as thou hast understood its dignity and excellence. Yet thou hast omitted much that belongs to a full understanding of the necessity of temperance in human actions. It was a punishment of the first sin that man lost the perfect use of reason, and that the passions should rise in rebellion against him, because he rose up against God in contempt of his most just command. In order to repair this damage, temperance became necessary; by it man restrains his concupiscences within proper bounds; he perceives the perfect medium in that which is desirable and he is taught to follow once more the dictates of reason, bringing him near to the Divinity and declining to follow his concupiscences like irrational beasts. Without this virtue it is not possible for man to divest himself of the spoiled human nature, nor to dispose himself for the graces and wisdom of God; for they will not enter into a soul subject to the body of sin (Wisdom 1, 4). He that knows how to moderate his passions by denying them their immoderate and bestial desires, will be able to say and experience in truth, what is said of the Canticles (2, 4): that the King has introduced him into the cellars of his delicious wine, and into the treasurehouse of his wisdom and spiritual gifts; for this virtue is a storehouse of most beautiful and fragrant virtues for the delight of the Almighty.

Although of course I wish thee to labor much in acquiring all virtues pertaining to temperance, I desire nevertheless that thou consider especially the beauty and fragrance of chastity, the strength which abstinence and sobriety in eating and drinking will give, the sweet influence of modesty in words and actions, the exalted nobility of poverty in the use of created things. With the help of these virtues, thou wilt attain the divine enlightenment, the peace and tranquillity of thy soul, the serenity of thy faculties, the right government of thy inclinations; thou wilt be entirely illumined with the splendors of the divine graces and gifts; from an animal and sensual way of living thou wilt be raised to a heavenly intercourse and an angelic life; and that is what I seek in thee and what thou thyself by divine assistance art striving after. Be careful therefore, my dearest, and watch for the divine light in all thy actions, and let not any of thy powers be induced to activity merely by pleasure and inclination; but always act according to reason and for the glory of the Most High in all things necessary for the conduct of thy life; in eating, in sleeping, in dressing, in speaking, in hearing, in desiring, in correcting, in commanding, in speaking: let all be governed in thee by the light and the pleasure of the Lord God, and not by thy own.

And in order that thou mayest so much the more be captivated by the beauty and loveliness of the virtue of temperance, consider the vileness of its contrary vices and let thyself be deeply impressed according to the divine light given thee; consider assiduously how ugly, abominable, horrible and monstrous the world is in the sight of God and the saints on account of the enormous abominations, which men commit against this lovable virtue. Look how some follow like brutes after the horrors of sensuality, how gluttony degrades others, how some fol-

low after pleasures of play and vanity, how others are dominated by pride and presumption, how many are entangled in avarice and the desire of gain, how they all follow the impulse of passions, seeking in this life only pleasure, while in the life to come they pile up for themselves eternal torments and incur the loss of the beatific vision of their God and Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

My daughter, these most noble and excellent gifts of the Holy Ghost, which thou hast come to understand, are the emanations of the Divinity communicating themselves to and transforming the holy souls: on their own part they do not admit of any limitation but only on the part of the subject upon which they act. If the creatures would empty their hearts of earthly love and affections, although their heart is limited, they would participate without measure in the torrent of the infinite Godhead through the inestimable gifts of the Holy Ghost. The virtues purify the creature from the ugliness and guilt of its vices, and thereby they begin to restore the disconcerted order of its faculties, which was first lost by original sin and afterwards increased by actual sins; they add beauty to the soul, strength and joy in doing good. But the gifts of the Holy Ghost raise these same virtues to a sublime perfection, adornment and beauty, by which they dispose, beautify and fill the soul with graces and introduce it to the chamber of its Spouse, where it remains united with the Divinity in a spiritual bond of eternal peace. From this most blessed condition it proceeds faithfully and truthfully to the practice of heroic virtues; and laden with them it returns to the same source from which it issued forth, namely God himself. In his shadow it rests and is satiated, freed from the impetuous fury of the passions and their disorderly appetites. Such a happiness however is the lot of few, and only by experience can it actually be known, who does attain it.

Take heed therefore, my dearest, and study profoundly how thou canst ascend to the height of these gifts; for it is the will of the Lord and mine, that thou ascend higher up as a guest in the feast (Luc. 14, 10) which is prepared for thee in all the sweetness of his blessed gifts (Ps. 20, 4) and to which thou hast been invited for this very purpose by this excess of liberality. Remember that there are only two ways to eternity: the one, which leads to eternal death by contempt of virtue and ignorance of the Divinity; the other, which leads to eternal life by the profitable knowledge of the Most High; for this is eternal life (Jno. 17, 3), that men know the way to Him and to his Onlybegotten, whom He sent into the world. The way of death is trodden by innumerable wicked ones (Eccles. 1, 14), who are unaware of their own ignorance, presumption and insipid pride. To those, whom his mercy calls to his admirable light (1 Pet. 2, 9), and whom He engenders anew as sons of light, God gives by this regeneration a new being in faith, hope and charity, making them his own and heirs of an eternal and godlike fruition. Having been made sons they are endowed with the virtues accompanying the first justification, in order that as sons of light, they may perform corresponding works of light; and over and above they receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And just as the material sun denies its light and warmth to nothing that is capable and fit for its influence, so also the divine Wisdom, emitting its voice on the high mountains, on the royal highway and in the most hidden paths, invites and calls out to all, and hides itself or denies itself to no one (Prov. 8,1). But the foolishness of men makes them stupid and deaf, their impious malice makes them scoffers, and their unbelieving perversity turns them away from God, whose Wisdom finds

no place in the malevolent heart (Wisdom 1, 4), nor in a body subject to sin.

Thou however, my daughter, remember thy promises, thy vocation and thy aspirations; for the tongue which lies to God, is an abominable murderer of the soul (Wisdom 1, 11, 12): see that thou do not pursue death in the error of this life, nor draw upon thyself ruin by the work of thy hands (Cant. 2, 4), as by divine light, thou hast seen the sons of darkness do. Fear the powerful God and Lord with an humble and a well-ordered fear, and in all thy works be governed by that Master. Make thy heart gentle, yielding and docile to discipline and works of piety. Judge of things according to the true value of virtue and vice. Animate thyself with an invincible fortitude to strive after the most arduous and exalted, and to endure the most adverse and exacting labors. By discretion choose the means for attaining to these results. Give way to the force of the divine light, by which thou canst transcend all sensible things, rise to the highest knowledge of the hidden secrets of divine wisdom and distinguish between the things of the new and of the old man. Then wilt thou be made capable of partaking of this wisdom; for then thou wilt enter into the wine-cellar of thy Spouse and be inebriated with his love, and his eternal charity will be well ordered in thee.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRECAUTIONS IN REGARD TO VISIONS AND REVELATIONS.

My daughter, in the enlightenment, which thou hast received in this chapter, thou hast a certain rule of action in regard to the visions and revelations of the Lord, and it inculcates two precautions. The one consists in thy subjecting these relations to the examination and the judgment of thy confessors and superiors, asking the Most High with a lively faith, that He give them light to understand his divine will and truth to instruct thee fully therein. The other consists in questioning thy own heart and observing the effects of these revelations and visions, prudently trying to assure thyself against any error. For the divine influence, which accompanies them, will urge and draw thee on, inflaming thy heart to chaste love and reverence of God to acknowledgment of thy littleness, to abhorrence of the earthly vanities, to desire of being despised by creatures, to joyful suffering, to love of the cross and an earnest and generous acceptance of it; it will move thee to seek the last place, to love those that persecute thee, to fear and abhor sin, even the slightest, to aspire to the purest, the most perfect and refined in virtue, to deny thyself thy own inclinations, and to unite thyself to the highest and truest good. When He thus teaches thee the most holy and perfect things of the Christian law and excites thee to imitate Him and me, then thou wilt have infallible signs of divine truth revealed to thee by the Most High in these visions.

And in order that thou, dearest, mayest execute

this doctrine, which thou hast received through the kindness of the Most High, do not ever forget it, and do not lose sight of the blessing of having been instructed by Him in these things with so much loving caresses; renounce all human esteem and consolation, all the delight and pleasure of the world. All that thy earthly inclinations demand, refuse to thyself, although it may be small and licit in itself; turn thy back on all sensible things, seeking only to love and to suffer. This is the science and divine philosophy taught thee by the visits of the Most High and in it thou wilt feel the force of the divine fire, which should never through thy fault and thy negligence, be allowed to become extinguished in thy bosom. Be alert, dilate thy heart, gird thyself with fortitude in order to be commissioned with great undertakings and be able to accomplish them. Be constant in thy faith regarding these admonitions, believing in them, esteeming them and writing them in thy soul with an humble and loving affection of thy heart, as being sent in faithful solicitude by thy Spouse and transmitted to thee by me, thy Teacher and Mistress.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS OF THE QUEEN AND OUR OWN.

Admirable, my daughter, is the love, the fidelity and the solicitude with which the angelic spirits assist mortals in their necessities; and most horrible is the forgetfulness, ingratitude and grossness on the part of men in failing to acknowledge this debt. In the bosom of the Most High, whose face they see (Matth. 8, 10) in beatific clearness, these heavenly spirits perceive the infinite paternal love of the Father in heaven for earthly men, and therefore they appreciate and estimate worthily the blood of the Lamb, by which men were bought and rescued, and they know the value of the souls thus purchased with the treasures of the Divinity. Thence arises their watchfulness and attention in securing the interests of the souls, which, on account of the value set upon them by the Most High, have been given into their charge. I wish thee to understand well, how by the ministry of these angels, mortals would receive great enlightenment, and incomparable favors from the Lord, if only they did not hinder them by their sins and abominations, and by their oblivion of this inestimable blessing. But as they block up the way, which God in his ineffable Providence has opened up for conducting them to eternal felicity, the greater part of them damn themselves, whereas, with the protection of the angels and with a proper estimate of his blessing, they could save themselves.

O my dearest daughter, since many men are so

indifferent in attending to the paternal works of my Son and Lord, I seek in thee a special gratitude for this blessing. Since He has dealt with thee liberally in his appointment of angels for thy guard, be attentive to their intercourse and listen to their injunctions with reverence; give thyself over to their guidance, honor them as the ambassadors of the Most High, seek their favor, in order that, having been cleansed of thy sins and freed from imperfection, inflamed with divine love, thou mayest become so spiritualized, as to be fit to treat with them as their companion in the participation of the divine illuminations. These He will not withhold from thee, if thou on thy part dispose thyself in the manner I desire.

Since thou hast desired to know in the spirit of obedience, what was the reason that the holy angels communicated with me in so many kinds of visions, I will respond to thy desires, explaining more clearly, what thou hast understood and written with the aid of divine light. The cause of this privilege was, on the part of the Most High, his most liberal love, with which He pursued me, and on my part, it was the state of pilgrimage, in which I then found myself. For it was neither possible nor befitting, that this life should be altogether uniform in regard to the acts of virtue, by which the divine Wisdom wished to raise me above all creation. As this pilgrimage was to be performed by me as a human wayfarer, subject to the use of the senses with all its various coincidences of life in the practice of virtue, I sometimes acted altogether in a spiritual manner and without the hindrance of the senses, when the angels communicated with me as they do among themselves; at other times it was necessary for me to suffer and to be afflicted in the lower part of my soul or in my sensitive faculties; at other times again I suffered want, loneliness and interior dereliction. According to the

vicissitudes of these different effects and conditions I received the favors and the visits of the holy angels. Many times then did I speak to them by intelligence, at others in imaginary species, at others in corporeal and sensible vision, according as my state and necessities demanded and the Most High ordained.

By all these means my faculties and senses were illumined and sanctified through the divine influences and blessings, in order that I might experience in reality all these operations and through all of them receive the influx of supernatural grace. But in regard to these favors, my dearest daughter, I wish thee to remember, that although God acted with such magnificent mercy toward me, He nevertheless followed his intention of conferring them upon me so lavishly not only because of my dignity as his Mother, but because He took into account my co-operation and disposition by which I concurred with his graces on my part. I withdrew all my faculties and senses from intercourse with created things, and rejecting all that was merely sensible and created, turned to the highest Good and centered all the powers of my will on his holy love. In this disposition of my soul I sanctified all my faculties by co-operation with these favors, visions and illuminations, having evacuated them of all human and terrestrial pleasures. So great was the reward of my works in mortal flesh, that thou canst not understand it, nor describe it with mortal tongue. The liberality of the Highest at once makes an advance payment of the blessings in this life as a pledge of those He has reserved for the eternal.

And although the powerful arm of God by these means wished to prepare me worthily from my Conception for the incarnation of the Word in my womb, and to sanctify and form my faculties and senses for the inter-

course and communication with my Son: nevertheless, if other souls would dispose themselves in imitation of me, living not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, free and untouched by the earthly contagion, the Most High would show his fidelity to these souls as well and would not deny them his blessings and favors according to the equity of his divine Providence.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF MARY: A LESSON TO HER CLIENTS.

My daughter, renovate many times in the secret of thy heart thy esteem for the blessing of tribulations, which the hidden providence of God dispenses for the justification of mortals. These are the judgments justified in themselves (Psalm 18, 10, 11) and more valuable than precious stones and gold, more sweet than the honeycomb, to those who know how to hold them in proper esteem. I wish thee to remember, my beloved, that to suffer and to be afflicted with or without one's fault is a benefit of which one cannot be worthy without special and great mercy of the Almighty; moreover to be allowed to suffer for one's sins, is not only a mercy, but is demanded by justice. Behold, however, the great insanity of the children of Adam nowadays in desiring and seeking after emoluments, benefits, and favors agreeable to their senses, and in sleeplessly striving to avert from themselves, that which is painful or includes any hardship or trouble. It would be to their greatest benefit to seek tribulations diligently even when unmerited, yet they strive by all means to avoid them even when merited, and even though they cannot be happy and blessed without having undergone such sufferings.

When gold is untouched by the furnace-heat, the iron by the file, the grain by the grinding stone or flail, the grapes by the winepress, they are all useless and will not attain the end for which they are created. Why then

will mortals continue to deceive themselves, by expecting, in spite of their sins, to become pure and worthy of enjoying God, without the furnace or the file of sorrows? If they were incapable and unworthy of attaining to the crown and reward of the infinite and eternal Good when innocent, how can they attain it, when they are in darkness and in disgrace before the Almighty? In addition to this the sons of perdition are exerting all their powers to remain unworthy and hostile to God and in evading crosses and afflictions which are the paths left open for returning to God, in rejecting the light of the intellect which is the means of recognizing the deceptiveness of visible things, in refusing the nourishment of the just which is the only means of grace, the price of glory, and above all in repudiating the legitimate inheritance, selected by my Son and Lord for Himself and for all his elect, since He was born and lived continually in afflictions and died upon the cross.

By such standards, my daughter, must thou measure the value of suffering, which the worldly will not understand. Since they are unworthy of heavenly knowledge, they despise it in proportion to their ignorance. Rejoice and congratulate thyself in thy sufferings, and whenever the Almighty deigns to send thee any, hasten to meet it and welcome it as one of his blessings and pledges of his glorious love. Furnish thy heart with magnanimity and constancy, so that when occasion of suffering is given thee thou mayest bear it with the same equanimity as the prosperous and agreeable things. Be not filled with sadness in executing that which thou hast promised in gladness, for the Lord loves those that are equally ready to give as to receive. Sacrifice thy heart and all thy faculties as a holocaust of patience and chant in new hymns of praise and joy the justification of the

Most High, whenever in the place of thy peregrination He signalizes and distinguishes thee as his own with the signs of his friendship which are no other than the tribulations and trials of suffering.

Take notice, my dearest, that my most holy Son and myself are trying to find among those who have arrived at the way of the cross, some soul, whom We can instruct systematically in this divine science and whom We can withdraw from the worldly and diabolical wisdom, in which the sons of Adam, with blind stubbornness, are rejecting the salutary discipline of sufferings. If thou wishest to be our disciple enter into this school, in which alone is taught the doctrine of the cross and the manner of reaching true peace and veritable delights. With this wisdom the earthly love of sensible pleasures and riches is not compatible; nor the vain ostentation and pomp, which fascinates the blear-eyed worldlings, who are so covetous of passing honors, and so full of ignorant admiration for costly grandeur. Thou, my daughter, choose for thyself the better part of being among the lowly and the forgotten ones of this world. I was Mother of the Godman himself, and, on that account, Mistress of all creation conjointly with my Son: yet I was little known and my Son very much despised by men. If this doctrine were not most valuable and secure, We would not have taught it by word and example. This is the light, which shines in the darkness (John 1, 7), loved by the elect and abhorred by the reprobate.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TEN YEARS OF DESOLATION WHICH AFFLICTED THE
QUEEN : A CONSOLING THOUGHT IN ARIDITY AND DIS-
TRACTION.

My daughter, all goods are estimated according to the appreciation in which creatures hold them: in so far they value them, as they know them to be good. But since there is only one true Good, and all the others merely fictitious and apparent, it follows, that only the highest Good is to be appreciated and recognized. Then only shalt thou give Him true appreciation and love, when thou shalt enjoy and esteem Him above all created things. By this appreciation and love will also be measured the sorrow of losing Him and from this thou canst understand somewhat my sentiments, at the time when the eternal God absented Himself from me, leaving me in my fears lest perhaps I had lost Him through my own fault. There is no doubt, that many times the sorrows of this anxiety and the force of love would have deprived me of life, if the Lord himself had not preserved it.

Imagine then, what ought to be the grief of losing God really by sin, if, without the bad effects of sin, the absence of our true Good could cause such terrible suffering to the soul, knowing at the same time, that it has not lost Him, but still possesses Him, though hidden and disguised to its present consciousness. But this wisdom seems far from the mind of carnal men: with a most perverse blindness they continue to make much of the visible and fictitious good, and they torment themselves

and are disconsolate, whenever it fails them. Because they never taste or recognize the highest and truest Good, they take no thought or reckoning of It. And although my most holy Son has brought a remedy for this dreadful ignorance contracted by the first sin, by meriting for men faith and charity, thereby affording them the possibility of knowing and experiencing to a certain extent the Good, which they never have experienced; yet, O sorrow, how easily charity is wasted and set aside for any kind of pleasure, and how often faith remains without any fruit and is involved in death! The sons of darkness live as if they had only a counterfeit or doubtful connection with eternity.

Fear, my soul, this so slightly accounted danger; rouse thyself and live always in watchfulness and preparation for the attacks of the enemies, who never sleep. Let thy meditation day and night be, how thou canst provide against losing the highest Good, which thou lovest. It is not befitting that thou sleep or slumber in the midst of invisible enemies. If sometimes thy Beloved hides Himself from thee, hope in patience and seek Him solicitously without ceasing, since thou knowest not his secret judgments. For the time of his absence and temptation provide thyself with the oil of charity and good intention, so that it fail thee not in time of necessity and that thou mayest not be rejected with the foolish and negligent virgins.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PERSECUTIONS OF MEN AND OF THE DEVIL; A WHOLESOME
MEDICINE FOR US.

Take notice then, my Daughter, that the example of these events of my life should serve thee for thy instruction and direction. Treasure up this example lovingly in thy bosom and allow it to dilate thy heart, so as to receive with joy the persecutions and calumnies of creatures, whenever thou art made partaker of such happiness. The sons of perdition, who serve vanity, are ignorant of the treasure of suffering injuries and of pardoning them, and they make a boast of vengeance, which even according to the requirements of the natural reason is reprehensible and arises from a heart brutal and beastly, rather than from a human. On the other hand, he who pardons injuries magnanimously and forgets them, although he may not have divine faith nor the light of the Gospel, becomes noble and excellent, and does not pay vile tribute to the fierce and irrational brutality of revenge.

And if the vice of revenge is so contrary even to the dictates of nature, consider, my daughter, how much it is opposed to grace and how hateful and abominable the vengeful are in the eyes of my most holy Son, who made Himself man, suffered and died for no other purpose than to forgive and to obtain the pardon of the Almighty for the injuries committed by the human race. Against this tendency of his whole life and against his whole nature and infinite bounty, vengeance is arrayed;

as far as in him lies, the vindictive man destroys entirely, as well God himself as all his works. And for this attempt he well merits, that God should destroy him with all his might. Between the person who pardons and suffers injuries, and the vindictive, there is the same difference as between the one and only heir and the deadly enemy; this one provokes all the wrath of God and the other merits and obtains all blessings; because in this virtue he exhibits a most perfect image of the celestial Father.

I wish thee, O soul, to understand, that to suffer injuries with equanimity and to pardon them entirely for the Lord, will be more acceptable in his eyes, than if thou choose of thy own will to do the most severe penance and shed thy own blood for Him. Humble thyself before those who persecute thee, love them and pray for them from thy true heart; thereby shalt thou turn toward thee in love the heart of thy God and rise to the perfection of holiness, and thou shalt overcome hell in all things. That great dragon, who persecutes all men, was confounded many times by my humility and meekness, and his fury could not tolerate the sight of these virtues. From them he fled more swiftly than the sun's rays. I gained great victories for my soul and won glorious triumphs for the exaltation of the Divinity. When any creature rose up against me, I conceived no anger toward it, for I knew in reality it was an instrument of the Most High, directed by his Providence for my special good. This knowledge and the consideration, that it was a creature of my Lord, capable of grace, excited me to love it truly with a greater fervor, and I did not rest until I could reward this benefit of persecution by obtaining for it eternal life, as far as was possible.

Strive after, therefore, and labor for the imita-

tion of that, which thou hast understood and written; show thyself most meek, peaceful and agreeable toward those, who molest thee; esteem them truly in thy heart, and do not take vengeance of thy Lord by taking vengeance on his instruments, nor despise the inestimable jewel of injuries. As far as lies in thee always give good for evil, (Rom. 12, 148) benefits for injuries, love for hate, praise for blame, blessings for malediction. Then wilt thou be a perfect daughter of thy Father (Matth. 5, 43), the beloved spouse of thy Lord, my friend and my most cherished daughter.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SWEET PROVIDENCE OF GOD AS EXHIBITED IN THE
EARLY LIFE OF THE QUEEN.

My daughter, the most valuable science of man is to know how to resign himself entirely into the hands of his Creator, since He knows why he has formed him and for what end each man is destined. Man's sole duty is to live in obedience and in the love of his Lord. God will charge himself most solicitously with the care of those that thus confide in Him; He will take upon Himself the management of all the affairs and all the events of this life in order to draw blessings and benefits for those that thus trust in his fidelity. He afflicts and corrects the just by adversities, He consoles and rejoices them with his favors, He inspires them with hope in his promises, and threatens them and inspires them with fear by his threats; He absents Himself in order to attract their love, He shows Himself to the souls in order to reward and preserve them in fervor, and in all these things He makes the lives of the chosen ones more delightful and beautiful. All this happened to me in that which thou hast written of me; He visited me and prepared me in his mercy with many different kinds of blessings, difficulties and labors, persecutions of creatures, and the separation from my parents and from all men.

In the midst of these various trials the Lord did not forget my weakness, for with the sorrow for the death of my mother, holy Anne, He combined the consolation and comfort of permitting me to be present at

her death. O my soul, how many blessings do men lose by not attaining to this wisdom! They hold themselves aloof from the divine Providence, which is powerful and sweet and unfailing, which measures the orbs of heaven and the elements; which counts the footsteps, discerns the thoughts, and disposes everything for the benefit of the creatures. Instead of all this men are given over to their own solitudes, which are inefficient and weak, blind, uncertain and inconsiderate. From this false beginning originate and follow irreparable evils for man; for he deprives himself of the divine protection and falls from the dignity of having his Creator as his Helper and Defender. What is still worse, if by his carnal wisdom and by diabolical astuteness to which man resigns himself, he succeeds sometimes in obtaining what he seeks, he deems himself fortunate on account of this, his own misfortune! And with sensible pleasure he imbibes the poison of eternal death in the deceitful delight, which he has gained, while incurring the alienation and abhorrence of his God.

Mind well, then, my daughter, this danger and let thy whole solicitude be to cast thyself securely into the arms of thy provident God and Lord. He being infinite in wisdom and power, loves thee much more than thou lovest thyself, and He knows and desires for thee greater goods, than thou ever canst learn to desire and request. Confide in his goodness and in his promises, which do not admit of failure; remember what He says through his Prophet to the just: that it is well with man (Is. 3, 10) since God takes upon Himself his desires and cares, and charges Himself with them in order to deal with them according to his generosity. By means of this most secure confidence thou wilt even in this mortal life enjoy the blessedness of a tranquil and peaceful con-

science; and although thou mayest find thyself surrounded by the tempestuous waves of trial and adversity which cast over thee the sorrows of death (Psalm 17, 5), and although the terrors of hell may surround Thee, suffer thou and hope in patience, so that thou err not from the portal of the grace and the good will of the Most High.

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE OF THE CROSS.

My daughter, many times I shall repeat to thee the lesson containing the greatest wisdom for souls, which consists in the knowledge of the cross, in the love of sufferings, and in putting this knowledge into practice by bearing afflictions with patience. If the condition of mortals were not so low, they would covet sufferings merely for the sake of their God and Lord, who has proclaimed them to be according to his will and pleasure; for the faithful and loving servant should always prefer the likings of his lord to his own convenience. But the worldlings in their torpidity are moved neither by the duty of conforming to their Father and Lord, nor by his declaration that all their salvation consists in following Christ in his sufferings and that his sinful children must reap the fruit of the Redemption by imitation of their sinless Chief.

Accept then, my dearest, this doctrine and engrave it deeply into thy heart. Understand that as a daughter of the Most High, as a spouse of my Son, and as my disciple, even if from no other motive, thou must acquire the precious gem of suffering and thus become pleasing to thy Lord and Spouse. I exhort thee, my daughter, to select the sufferings of his Cross in preference to his favors and gifts and rather embrace afflictions than desire to be visited with caresses; for in choosing favors and delights thou mayest be moved by selflove, but in accepting tribulations and sorrows, thou canst be moved only by the love of Christ. And if pref-

erence is to be given to sufferings rather than to delights, wherever it can be done without sin, what foolishness is it, when men pursue so blindly the deceitful and vile delights of the senses, and when they abhor so much all that pertains to suffering for Christ and for the good of their soul?

Thy incessant prayer, my daughter, should be always to repeat: here I am, Lord, what wilt Thou do with me? Prepared is my heart, I am ready and not disturbed; what dost Thou wish me to do for Thee? These sentiments should fill thy heart in their full and true import, repeating them more by sincere and ardent affection, than by word of mouth. Let thy thoughts be exalted, thy intentions most upright, pure and noble, desiring to fulfill in all things the greater pleasure of the Lord, who with measure and weight dispenses both sufferings and the favors of his graces. Examine and search within thyself without ceasing, by what sentiments, by what actions, and in what occasion thou mayest guard against offense and in what thou canst please thy Beloved most perfectly, and thus learn what thou must strive to correct or what thou must aspire to within thyself. Every disorder, be it yet so small, and all that may be less pure and perfect, see thou curtail and expunge immediately, even though it seem allowable or even of some profit; all that is not most pleasing to the Lord, thou must consider as evil, or as useless for thyself; and no imperfection must appear small to thee, if it is displeasing to God. With this anxious fear and holy solicitude thou shalt walk securely; and be certain, my dearest daughter, that it cannot enter into the mind of man, what copious reward the most high Lord reserves for those souls that live in this kind of attention and solicitude.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

My dearest daughter, most high and venerable are the judgments of the Lord, and they should not be scrutinized by mortals, since they are impenetrable. His Majesty commanded me to enter the state of matrimony and at the same time concealed from me the sacrament dependent upon entering it. Matrimony was required, in order that my parturition might be respectable in the eyes of the world, and that the Word, made incarnate in my womb, might be reputed as the son of my husband, since at the same time the world was to remain ignorant of this mystery. It was also a suitable means to conceal this mystery from Lucifer and the demons, who in such rage were bent on wreaking their fury upon me. When they saw me enter the married state as other women, their fury was appeased, not thinking it compatible, that She should have a husband, who was to be the Mother of God himself; Lucifer himself was somewhat quieted by this means and made a truce with his malice. The Lord had also other ends in view, which have become manifest, although, on account of circumstances, they were hidden to me at that period of my life.

I wish Thee to understand, my daughter, that the certain prospect of being espoused to any man, without at the same time knowing the mystery concealed from me by the Lord, was the greatest sorrow and affliction, which until then I had ever experienced; and if the divine power had not strengthened me in this pain, and had not given me some kind of confidence, although

it was only obscure and undetermined, I would have lost my life in this suffering. But from this event thou shouldst learn how complete must be the resignation of the creature to the will of the Most High, and how it must restrict its shortsighted judgment and guard against scrutinizing the secrets of a Majesty so exalted and mysterious. If any danger or difficulty seems to present itself in that which the Lord commands, let man confide in Him and firmly believe that he was not placed therein in order to be forsaken, but in order that he may come forth victorious and triumphant, if he co-operates on his own part with the assistance given by the Lord. Whenever the soul seeks to scrutinize the decrees of his wisdom and satisfy itself before it obeys and believes, let it be convinced that it defrauds the Creator of its glory and honor, and at the same time loses for itself the merit of its works.

I was aware that God is superior to all creatures and that He had no need of our foresight; for He seeks only the subjection of our will, since the creature cannot give Him counsel, but only obedience and praise. And although, on account of not knowing what He wished of me and ordained for me in the state of matrimony, the love, which I had for chastity caused me much affliction; yet that grievous sorrow did not make me curious and inquisitive, but served to make my obedience more excellent and pleasing in his eyes. By this example thou thyself must regulate the subjection to that which thou perceivest to be according to the pleasure of the Lord thy Spouse, resigning thyself entirely to his protection and confiding in the firmness of his promises. And wherever thou hast the approbation of thy priests and superiors, allow thyself to be governed without any resistance to their commands and to the divine aspirations.

CHAPTER XXII.

PERFECTION POSSIBLE IN ALL STATES OF LIFE: MARY THE
VALIANT WOMAN.

My daughter, in the example of the matrimonial life wherein the Most High placed me, thou findest a reproof for those souls, who allege their life in the world as an excuse for not following perfection. To God nothing is impossible, and nothing is likewise impossible to those, who with a lively faith, hope in Him, and resign themselves entirely to his divine Providence. I lived in the house of my spouse with the same perfection as in the temple; for in changing my state of life I altered neither my sentiments nor the desire and anxiety to love and serve God; on the contrary I added to my solicitude lest the obligations of a spouse should hinder me in God's service. On this account God favored me and disposed and accommodated powerfully all things in conformity to my desires. The Lord will do the same for all men, if on their part they correspond. They however blame the state of matrimony, deceiving themselves; for the hindrance to a holy and perfect life, is not the state, but the vain and superfluous cares and anxieties, in which they involve themselves forgetting the sweetness of the Lord and seeking and preferring their own.

And if there is no excuse for not living a perfect life in the world, still less will the duties and obligations of the religious state be an excuse. Never imagine thyself exempt from the pursuit of perfection on account

of being a superioress; for since God has placed thee in office by obedience, thou must not despair of his assistance and protection; He himself will each day assume the responsibility of strengthening thee and helping thee to fulfill thy duties, without relaxing in the pursuit of a perfect love due to God. Oblige Him by the sacrifice of thy own will, submitting in humble patience to all that his divine Providence may ordain. If thou dost not hinder the course of his Providence, I assure thee of his protection and of the power of his divine arm to direct thee and guide all thy actions toward perfection. Having once tasted the intercourse with heavenly things, do not allow thy negligence to extinguish in thy mind the divine light, that illumines and enlightens thee in darkness. Eat not thy bread in idleness; but work without relaxing in solicitude, and then thou shalt eat of the fruit of thy diligence. Strengthened by the Lord, thou wilt perform works worthy of his regard and complaisance and thou wilt run after the odor of his ointments until thou arrive at their eternal possessions. Amen.

BOOK THREE

Lessons given by the Queen of Heaven in connection with the History
of her Life up to her Return from Elisabeth

CHAPTER I.

GOOD USE OF ENLIGHTENMENTS AND GRACES.

My daughter, the mortals are not capable of understanding the ineffable operations of the arm of the Omnipotent in preparing me for the Incarnation of the eternal Word. Especially during the nine days, which preceded this exalted sacrament was my spirit elevated and united with the immutable being of the Divinity. I was submerged in the ocean of his infinite perfections, participating in all those eminent and divine effect, which are beyond all presentiment of the human hearts. The knowledge of creatures communicated to me penetrated into their very essence, so that it was more profound and piercing than that of all the angelic spirits, though their knowledge of creation, on account of the beatific vision, is altogether admirable. Moreover the images of them all were impressed upon my mind to be used by me according as I desired.

What I wish of thee today is to take notice how I used this knowledge and to imitate me according to thy power with the help of the infused light, which thou hast received for this purpose. Profit by the knowledge of creatures by making of them a ladder to ascend unto

God thy Creator; so that thou mayest seek in all of them their first beginning and their last end. Let them serve thee as a mirror from which the Godhead is reflected, reminding thee of his Omnipotence and inciting thee to the love, which He seeks in thee. Be thou filled with wonder and praise at the greatness and magnificence of the Creator and in his presence humiliate thyself to the dust. Shun no difficulty or suffering in order to become meek and humble of heart. Take notice, my dearest, that this virtue of humility was the firm foundation of all the wonders, which the Most High wrought in me; and in order that thou mayest esteem this virtue so much the more, remember that of all others, it is at the same time the most precious, the most delicate and perishable; for if thou lose it in any respect, and if thou be not humble in all things without exception, thou wilt not be humble in anything. Remember thy earthly and corruptible nature, and be not ignorant of the fact, that the Most High has providentially formed man in such a way that his own existence and formation intimate and rehearse the important lesson of humility never allowing him to be without this salutary teaching. On this account he has not formed him of the most excellent material, and has concealed the noblest part of his being in the sanctuary of his interior (Exod. 30, 24), teaching him to weigh as in a balance on the one side, the infinite and eternal existence of the Lord, and on the other, his own ignoble material existence. Thus he is to give unto God what belongs to Him, and to himself what belongs to his own self (Matth. 22, 21).

Most zealously I attended to this adjustment, becoming an example and guide therein to all the mortals. I wish that thou also do it in imitation of me. and that

thou zealously study to acquire the humility, which pleases the Most High and myself, who desire thy true advancement. I wish that thy perfection be built up in the deep trenches of thy own self-knowledge; in order that the deeper its foundations are laid, to so much the higher and more exalted perfection may rise the edifice of thy virtue. Thus thy will shall find a most intimate conformity with that of the Lord, who looks down from the eminence of his throne upon the humble of the earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE EXQUISITE ORDER IN GOD'S CREATION.

My daughter, from what thou art going to learn of the favors and blessings conferred upon me in preparation for the dignity of Mother of God, I wish thee to perceive the admirable order of his wisdom in the creation of man. Take notice, therefore, that his Creator made him out of nothing, not in order to be a slave, but in order to be the king and the master of all creation (Gen. 1, 26), and in order that he make use of creatures in sovereignty, command and mastery; yet at the same time man was to recognize himself as the image of his Maker and the work of his hand, remaining more devoted to God and more submissive to his will than the creatures to man; for all this was demanded by justice and reason. And in order that man might not be without information and knowledge of the Creator and of the means of perceiving and executing his will, He added to his natural light a greater one, more penetrating, more limpid, more certain, more free and extensive, namely the light of divine faith, by which man might know the existence of God and of his perfections, and conjointly with these, his works. Furnished with this knowledge and dominion man was established in good standing, honored and enriched, having no excuse for not devoting himself entirely to the fulfillment of the divine will.

But the foolishness of man disturbs this order and destroys this harmony, when, being created as the lord

and king of creatures, he enslaves himself, subjecting himself to them, and degrading his dignity in using visible things not as a prudent master, but as an unworthy vassal. For he debases himself beneath the lowest of creatures, by losing sight of the fact that he is their superior. All this perversity arises from the use of creatures not for the service of the Creator through well ordered faith, but for the indulgence of the passions and the delights of the senses. Hence also arises man's great abhorrence of those things which are not pleasing to the senses.

Thou, my dearest, look faithfully toward thy Creator and Lord and in thy soul seek to copy the image of his divine perfections: lose not the mastery and dominion over creatures, let none of them infringe upon thy liberty; but seek to triumph over all of them, allowing nothing to interpose itself between thee and thy Creator. Subject thyself gladly, not to the pleasurable in creatures, since that will obscure thy understanding and weaken thy will, but to the adverse and the painful resulting from their activity. Suffer this with joyous willingness, for I have done the same in imitation of my Son, although I had the power to neutralize their molestations and had no sins to atone for.

CHAPTER III

THE OBJECT OF ENLIGHTENMENTS.

My dearest daughter, great were the favors which the hand of the Most High showered upon me in the visions of the Divinity, vouchsafed me during the nine days before his conception in my womb. And although He did not manifest Himself intuitively and altogether unveiled, yet He did it in an exalted manner and with such effects as are reserved to his wisdom. In the remembrance of what I perceived in this vision, I rose to the true perception of the position which God held in comparison to men and men in comparison to God; my heart was inflamed with love and was torn with sorrow; for I realized the immensity of his love towards mortals, and their most ungrateful oblivion of his incomprehensible goodness. Many times would I have died at the thought of these extremes, if God himself had not comforted and preserved me. This sacrifice of his servant was most pleasing to his Majesty and He accepted it with greater complacency than all the holocausts of the old Law; for He beheld my humility and delighted in it very much. Whenever I performed these exercises, He showed great mercy to me and to my people.

These sacraments, my dearest, I manifest to thee in order to encourage thee to imitate me, as far as is possible will thy weak forces aided by grace. Look upon the works, which thou hast learnt of, as a pattern and example to be closely followed. Meditate much, and weigh over and over again as well! in the light of grace

as in that of reason, how exactly mortals ought to correspond to this immense kindness of God and to his eagerness to assist them. Compare at the same time the heartless obduracy of the children of Adam. I wish that thy heart be softened in affectionate thankfulness toward the Lord and melted in sorrow at these unhappy proceedings of men. I assure thee, my daughter, that on the day of the general adjustment, the cause of the greatest wrath of the just Judge shall be man's most ungrateful forgetfulness of this truth; and the confusion of men on account of this wrath shall be such, that on that day they would of their own accord cast themselves into the abyss of pain, if there were no ministers of divine justice to visit this retribution upon them.

In order to avoid such an abominable fault and in order to forestall such a horrible chastisement, renew in thyself the memory of the blessings, which thou hast received at the hands of his love and infinite clemency; and remember that God has distinguished thee in preference to the souls of many generations. Do not make the mistake of considering these great favors and special gifts as conferred on thee for thyself alone: they were conferred also for the sake of thy brethren: for the divine mercy is extended to all men. Therefore the return, which thou owest to the Lord, must be made first for thyself and then for thy brethren. And because thou art poor, offer up the life and merits of my most holy Son, and with them, all that I have suffered by the forces of my love. Thus wilt thou make thyself pleasing to God and tender some recompense for the ingratitude of mortals. In all these things exercise thyself repeatedly many times, remembering in the meanwhile what I thought and felt in similar acts and exercises.

CHAPTER IV.

SORROW FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND.

My dearest daughter, I wish that thou busy thyself much in meditating and pondering upon that which thou hast understood of my doings and sufferings at the time, when the Most High gave me such a deep insight into his goodness, which drew Him as with an infinite force to enrich men, and when He showed me the want of correspondence and the dark ingratitude of the mortals. When I turned from the consideration of this most liberal condescension of the Most High, to the perception and understanding of the foolish hard-heartedness of the sinners, my soul was pierced with an arrow of mortal anguish, which remained for life. And I wish to tell thee of another mystery: many times the Most High in order to heal the affliction and consternation of my heart in this sorrow, sought to console me by saying: "Accept Thou, my Spouse, the gifts, which the blind and ignorant world in its unworthiness despises and is incapable of receiving and understanding." With these words the Most High was accustomed to set free the currents of his divine bounty, which rejoiced my soul more than human powers can comprehend, or tongue explain.

I desire, therefore, that thou, my friend, be now my companion in the sorrow which I suffered and which is so little noticed by the living. In order to imitate me therein and in the effects of this most just grief, thou must deny thyself, forget thyself entirely, and crown thy heart with the thorns of sorrow at the behavior of

mortals. Weep thou in seeing them laugh at their eternal damnation, for such weeping is the most legitimate occupation of the true spouses of my most holy Son. Let them seek their delight only in the tears, which they pour out on account of their sins and those of the ignorant world. Thus prepare thy heart in order that the Lord may make thee a participant of his treasures; not in order to become rich, but in order that his Majesty may fulfill his most generous love toward thee and in order that souls may find justification. Imitate me in all that I teach thee, since thou knowest that this is my desire in favoring thee.

CHAPTER V.

PRAYER FOR SALVATION OF MEN.

My daughter, the more complete knowledge of the wonderful operations of the arm of the Almighty in raising me during the abstractive visions of the Divinity to the dignity of Mother, is reserved for the predestined when they shall come to know them in the heavenly Jerusalem. There they shall understand and see them in the Lord Himself and with that special delight and astonishment, which the angels experienced, when the Most High revealed these things to them for his exaltation and praise. And since his Majesty has shown Himself so lovingly generous toward thee, giving thee in preference to all the generations of men, such great knowledge and light concerning these so hidden sacraments, I desire, my friend, that thou signalize thyself above all creatures in praising and magnifying his holy name for the works of his powerful arm in my regard.

At the same time thou must strive, with all thy power, to imitate me in the works, which I performed by the aid of these great and wonderful blessings. Pray and sigh for the eternal salvation of thy brethren, and that the name of my Son may be extolled by all and known to the whole world. Thou must establish the habit of this kind of prayer, by a constant resolve, founded upon firm faith and unshaken confidence, and by never losing sight of thy misery in profound humility and self-abasement. Thus prepared, thou must battle with the divine love for the good of thy people, firmly con-

vinced, that the most glorious triumphs of divine love may especially be looked for in its dealings with the humble, who love God in uprightness. Raise thyself above thyself and give Him thanks for the special blessings conferred upon thee and for those conferred upon the human race. Transformed by this divine love, thou wilt merit other gifts, both for thyself and for thy brethren; and whenever thou findest thyself in his divine presence, do thou ask for his benediction.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOR.

Wonderful, my daughter, was the gift of humility, which the Most High conferred upon me in the event described by thee. And since his Majesty does not reject the prayers of those, that dispose themselves to receive it, I desire that thou imitate me and be my companion in the exercise of this virtue. I had no part in the sin of Adam, for I was exempted from his disobedience; but because I partook of his nature and by it was his daughter, I humiliated myself in my estimation to nothingness. In the light of this example then, how far must those humiliate themselves, who not only have had a part in the first sin, but also have committed other sins without number? The aim and motive of this humiliation moreover, should not be to remove the punishments of those sins, but to make restoration and recompense for the diminution and loss of honor, which was thereby occasioned to the Creator and Lord.

If a brother of thine should grievously offend thy natural father, thou wouldst not be a loving and loyal daughter of thy father, nor a true sister to thy brother, if thou wouldst not grieve for the offense and weep not over his ruin as over thy own; for to the father is due reverence and to thy brother thou owest love as to thyself. Consider then, dearest, and examine in the proper light, how much difference there is between thy Father who is in heaven and thy natural father, and how all of you are his children, bound together by the strictest

obligation of brethren and of servants of one true Master. Just as thou wouldst shed tears of humiliation and confusion at some ignominious fault of thy natural brother; so I wish that thou do it for the sins, which the mortals commit against God, sorrowing for them in confusion as if thou wert responsible for them thyself. That is what I did at the thought of the disobedience of Adam and Eve and of all the evils, which ensued therefrom to the human race. And the Most High was pleased with my charitable interest; for most agreeable in his sight are the tears shed for the sins, which are forgotten by those, that have committed them.

At the same time see thou bear ever in mind, that, no matter how great and rare are the favors received from the Most High, thou do not despise the danger of sin nor condemn the solicitous and humble performance of the ordinary duties of precept and charity. For these do not oblige thee to leave the presence of God: faith teaches thee, and inspiration should govern thee, to bear Him with thee in all occupations and places, quitting thyself and thy inclinations, but fulfilling in all things the will of thy Lord and Spouse. Do not allow thyself to be led in these sentiments by the trend of thy own inclinations, nor by that which seems to agree with thy own interior liking and taste; for many times the greatest danger is hidden beneath this cloak. In such doubts and hesitations let holy obedience be thy umpire and master; through it thou canst decide securely, and thou wilt need no other criterion for thy actions. Great victories and advances in merit are connected with the true submission of self and subjection of our own judgments to those of others. Thou shouldst never wish to retain for thyself the power to will or not to will: then thou shalt sing of victories and overcome thy enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

GRATITUDE TOWARD GOD.

My daughter, the work-shops and treasure-rooms of the Most High are those of a divine Lord and omnipotent King, and therefore without number or limit are the riches and treasures which they contain for the endowment of his chosen brides. He can enrich innumerable others just as He has enriched my soul, and yet infinitely more will remain. Although He will give to no creature as much as He has conferred upon me, it is not because He is not able or does not wish, but because no one will dispose himself for his grace as I did. But the Almighty is most liberal with some souls and enriches them so munificently, because they impede his gifts less, and dispose themselves better than others.

I desire, my most beloved, that thou place no obstacle to the love of thy Lord; but I wish, that thou dispose thyself for the jewels and gifts, intended for thee in order to make thee worthy of his bridal chamber. Remember that all the just souls receive this adornment from his hands, though each one according to the degree of the friendship and grace, which makes them capable of receiving them. If thou wishest to attain the highest purity of that perfection and become worthy of standing in the presence of thy Lord and Spouse, strive to be robust and strong in love; and thou knowest, that this is augmented in the same degree, as mortification and self-abnegation are practiced. Thou must deny thyself and forget all earthly things; thou must expel all thy mean-

ings toward thyself and toward visible things, in the divine love solely thou must increase and advance. Wash and purify thyself in the blood of thy Redeemer, Christ, and apply this cleansing many times by renewing thy loving sorrow for thy sins. Thereby wilt thou find grace in his eyes and thy beauty will be desired by Him, and all thy adornments will be full of the greatest perfection and purity.

And as thou hast been so highly favored and distinguished by the blessings of the Lord, it is just that thou, more than many generations of men, give thanks and with incessant praises magnify Him for what, He has condescended to do for thee. If this vice of ingratitude is so vile and reprehensible in the creatures, who owe Him little and in their earthliness and coarseness, forget the benefits of the Lord; greater will thy guilt be in falling short of thy obligations. And do not deceive thyself with the pretext of being humble; for there is a great difference between thankful humility and humble thanklessness. Remember that the Lord very often shows great favors to the unworthy, in order to manifest his goodness and munificence. On the contrary let no one become inflated, but let every one acknowledge so much the more his unworthiness, using it as a medicine and treacle against the poison of presumption. But gratitude will agree with this humble opinion of self, since we must acknowledge, that every good gift comes from the Father of lights and cannot ever be merited by creatures (James 1, 17). All have their source only in his goodness, binding us and obliging us to grateful recognition.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VAST GOODNESS OF GOD.

My dearest daughter, how far removed is worldly wisdom from the admirable operations of the divine power in these sacraments of the Incarnation of the divine Word in my womb! Flesh and blood cannot reach them, and not the angels and seraphim, though they be of the highest; nor can they know mysteries so deeply hidden and so far above the ordinary course of grace. Praise thou, my beloved, the Lord for them with incessant love and thankfulness. Be thou not any longer slow in understanding the greatness of his divine love and his readiness to benefit his friends and dear ones, whom He desires to elevate from the dust and enrich in diverse manners. As soon as thou hast penetrated into this truth, it will oblige thee to thank Him and incite thee to undertake the great things, that become a most faithful daughter and spouse.

And in order that thou mayest dispose thyself and be inspired so much the more, I remind thee, that the Lord often says these same words to his chosen ones: "*Revertere, revertere, ut intueamur te.*" For He derives just as great pleasure from their deeds, as when a father rejoices in his beloved and well-behaved son, whom he looks upon many times with great affection; or as an artist, when he beholds with pride the perfect works of his hands; or as a king, who inspects the rich city, which he has added to his dominions; or as one, who is pleased with his much beloved friend. There is only this difference: the Most High finds incomparably

more delight than all these in the souls, which He has chosen for his blessings; and in proportion as they dispose themselves and advance in virtue, the Lord also multiplies his favors and benefits. If the mortals, that attain to the light of faith, would enter into this truth, they would, merely on account of this complacency of the Almighty in their good deeds, not only preserve themselves from sin, but they would zealously engage in great works until death and eagerly show their loving servitude to Him, who is so liberal in rewarding, and so generous in his favors.

When, on this eighth day which thou hast described, the Lord in heaven spoke to me these words: "Revertere, revertere," asking me to turn toward Him and allow the celestial spirits to look upon me; I was made aware, that the pleasure, which his divine Majesty derived in beholding me, by itself exceeded all the delight and complacency, which He ever derived from all the most saintly souls in the height of their sanctity. In his gracious condescension He was more pleased in me than in all the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins and all the rest of the saints. And this pleasure and complacency of the Most High overflowed and enriched my spirit with such an influx of grace and participation of the Divinity, that thou canst neither understand nor explain it as long as thou art in the mortal flesh. But I tell thee of this hidden mystery, in order that thou mayest bless its Author, and that, while yet thy exile from the fatherland continues, thou dispose and exert thyself in my place and name to extend and reach out thy hands to great things (Prov. 31, 19). Give to the Lord the satisfaction expected of thee, and strive after it, thus earning his blessings and soliciting them for thyself and thy neighbor with perfect charity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF A SPOUSE OF GOD.

My daughter, the soul that has only a selfish and servile love is not a worthy spouse of the Most High, for she must not love or fear like a slave, nor is she supposed to serve for her daily wages. Yet although her heart must be a filial and generous love on account of the excellence and immense goodness of her Spouse, she must nevertheless also feel herself much bounden to Him, when she considers how rich and liberal He is; how, on account of his love for souls, He has created such a variety of visible goods in order that they might serve those who serve Him; and especially, when she considers how many hidden treasures He has in readiness in the abundance of his sweetness (Ps. 30, 20) for those that fear Him as his true children. I wish that thou feel deeply obliged to thy Lord and Father, thy Spouse and Friend, at the thought of the riches given to those souls, who become his dearest children. For, as a powerful Father, He holds in readiness these great and manifold gifts for his children, and if necessary, all of his gifts for each one of them in particular. In the midst of such motives and incentives of love the disaffection of men is inexcusable, and at the sight of so many blessings, given without measure, their ingratitude is unpardonable.

Remember, also, my dearest, that thou wast not foreigner, or stranger in this house of the Lord, his holy Church (Ephes. 2, 19); but thou wast made a do-

mestic and a spouse of Christ among the saints, favored by his gifts and by the dowry of a bride. Since all the treasures and riches of the bridegroom belong to the legitimate spouse, consider of how great possessions He makes thee participant and mistress. Enjoy them all, then, as his domestic, and be zealous for his honor as a much-favored daughter and spouse; thank Him for all these works and benefits, as if they had all been prepared for thee alone by the Lord. Love and reverence Him for thyself and for all thy neighbors, to whom God has been so liberal. In all this imitate, with thy weak faculties, that which thou hast understood of what I have done. I assure thee also, daughter, that it will be very pleasing to me, if thou magnify and praise the Omnipotent with fervent affection, for the favors and riches which, beyond all human conception, the divine right hand showered upon me.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAMILIAR CONVERSE WITH GOD.

My daughter, with special affection I manifest to thee now my will and desire that thou make thyself worthy of the intimate and familiar converse with God, and that for this purpose thou dispose thyself with great zeal and solicitude, weeping over thy sins, and forgetting and rejecting all the visible things, so that thou have no thought henceforth for any other thing outside of God. Therefore thou must begin to practice all that I have taught thee until now, and whatever I will yet teach thee in the balance of this history. I will accompany thee and guide thee on the course with which thou must maintain in this familiar intercourse and in regard to the favors, which thou receivest through his condescension, entertaining Him in thy heart by means of the faith, light and grace given to thee. If thou dost not first conform to this my admonition, and prepare thyself accordingly, thou wilt not reach the fulfillment of thy desires, nor shall I reap the fruit of my instructions, which I give to thee as thy Teacher.

Since thou has found, without any merit of thine, the hidden treasure and the precious pearl of my teachings and instruction (Matth. 13, 44), despise all other things, in order to possess and secure for thyself this prize of inestimable value; for with it thou shalt receive all other goods and thou wilt make thyself worthy of the intimate friendship of the Lord and of his perpetual indwelling in your heart. In exchange for

this great blessing, I desire that thou die to all earthly things and that thou offer the thankful love of an entirely purified will. In imitation of me be thou so humble, that as far as thou art concerned, thou be persuaded and convinced of thy entire worthlessness and incapability, not meriting to be considered even as a slave of the servants of Christ.

Remember, I was far from imagining, that the Most High had designed me for the dignity of Mother of God; and this was my state of mind although He had already promised his speedy coming into the world and although He had commanded me to desire after Him with such great affection, that on the day before the execution of this mystery I thought I would die and my heart would burst with loving sighs, if the divine Providence had not comforted me. He dilated my spirit with the firm hope, that the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father would descend from heaven without delay; yet on the other hand, my humility inclined me to fear, lest my presence in the world might perhaps retard his coming. Contemplate then, my beloved, this secret of my breast, and what an example it is for thee and for all the mortals. And since it is difficult for thee to understand and describe such high wisdom, look upon me in the Lord, in order that by his divine light, thou mayest mediate and comprehend the perfection of my actions; follow me by imitating me, and walk in my footsteps.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

My daughter, thou art filled with astonishment at seeing, by means of new light, the mystery of the humiliation of the Divinity in uniting Himself with the human nature in the womb of a poor maiden such as I was. I wish, however, my dearest, that thou turn thy attention toward thyself and consider, how God humiliated Himself, and came into my womb, not only for myself alone, but for thee as well. The Lord is infinite in his mercy and his love has no limit, and thus He attends and esteems and assists every soul who receives Him, and He rejoices in it, as if He had created it alone, and as if He had been made man for it alone. Therefore with all the affection of thy soul thou must, as it were, consider thyself as being thyself in person bound to render the full measure of thanks of all the world for his coming; and for his coming to redeem all. And if, with a lively faith thou art convinced and confessest, that the same God who, infinite in his attributes and eternal in his majesty, lowered Himself to assume human flesh in my womb, seeks also thee, calls thee, rejoices thee, caresses thee, and thinks of thee alone, as if thou wert his only creature (Gal. 2, 20); think well and reflect to what his admirable condescension obliges thee. Convert this admiration into living acts of faith and love; for, that He condescends to come to thee, thou owest entirely to the goodness of the King and Savior, since thou thyself couldst never find Him nor attain Him.

Considering merely that which this Lord can give thee outside of Himself, it will appear to thee

grand, even when thou perceivest it only by a mere human intelligence and affection. It is certainly true that any gift from such an eminent and supreme King is worthy of all estimation. But when thou beginst to consider and know by divine light, that this gift is God Himself and that He makes Thee partaker of his Divinity, when thou wilt understand, that without thy God and without his coming, all creation would be as nothing and despicable in thy sight; thou wouldst want to enjoy thyself and find rest only in the consciousness of possessing such a God, so loving, so amiable, so powerful, sweet and affluent; who, being such a great and infinite God, humiliates Himself to thy lowliness in order to raise thee from the dust and enrich thy poverty, performing toward thee the duties of a Shepherd, of a Father, a Spouse and most faithful Friend.

Attend, therefore, my daughter, in the secret of thy heart to all the consequences of these truths. Ponder and confer within thyself about this sweetest love of the great King for thee; how faithful He is in his gifts and caresses, in his favors, in the works confided to thee, in the enlightenment of thy interior, instructing thee by divine science in the infinite greatness of his Being, in his admirable works and most hidden mysteries, in universal truth and in the nothingness of visible existence. This science is the first beginning and principle, the basis and foundation of the knowledge which I have given thee in order that thou mayest attain to the decorum and magnanimity, with which thou art to treat the favors and benefits of this thy Lord and God, thy true blessedness, thy treasure, thy light and thy Guide. Look upon Him as upon the infinite God, loving, yet terrible. Listen, my dearest, to my words, to my teachings and discipline, for therein are contained the peace and the enlightenment of thy soul.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DANGERS OF TORPIDITY.

My daughter, since thou hast, by faith and divine light, arrived at a knowledge of the grandeur of God and of his ineffable condescension in coming down from heaven for thee and for all the mortals, let not this benefit be for the idle and fruitless. Adore the essence of God with profound reverence, and praise Him for what thou knowest of his goodness. Receive not light and grace in vain (II Cor. 6, 1) ; and study the encouraging example given by my most holy Son and myself in imitation of Him, as thou hast come to be instructed in it; for as He was the true God, and I his Mother (for in so far as He was man his most holy humanity was created), let us humiliate ourselves in the remembrance of our lowly human nature and confess the greatness of the Divinity, greater than any creature can comprehend. Do this especially when thou receivest the same Lord in the holy Sacrament. In this admirable Sacrament my most holy Son with Divinity and humanity comes to thee and remains with thee in a new and incomprehensible way. His great condescension is manifest, though it is little taken notice of and respected by mortals, nor does it find the return due to such love.

Let then thy acknowledgment be accompanied with as much humility, reverence and worship as is possible to thy combined powers and faculties; for though they be exerted to the utmost limit, they will always fall short of what thou owest to God and of what He

deserves. And in order that thou mayest as far as possible make up for thy deficiencies, offer up that, which my most holy Son and I have done; unite thy spirit and thy affections in union with the Church triumphant and militant, offering at the same time thy life as a sacrifice and praying that all nations may know, confess and adore their true God who became man for all. Thank Him for the benefits, which He has conferred and confers on all, whether they know Him or not, whether they confess or repudiate Him. Above all I ask of thee, my dearest, to do that which is most acceptable to the Lord and most pleasing to me; that thou grieve, and in sweet affection mourn over the gross ignorance and dangerous tardiness of the sons of men; over the ingratitude also of the children of the Church, who, having received the light of the divine faith, yet live in such interior forgetfulness of the works and benefits of the Incarnation, yea, of God himself, and so much so, that they seem to differ from infidels only in some ceremonies and exterior worship. They perform these without spirit or heartiness, many times offending and provoking the divine justice which they should placate.

Through this ignorance and torpidity it happens that they are not prepared to receive and acquire the true science of the Most High. They bring upon themselves the loss of the divine light and they deserve to be left in the heavy darkness, making themselves more unworthy than the infidels themselves and entailing upon themselves an incomparably greater chastisement. Mourn over such great damage of thy neighbors and pray for help from the bottom of thy heart. And in order that thou mayest put away from thy own self such formidable dangers, do not undervalue the favors and benefits, which thou receivest, nor, even under pretense of humil-

ity, belittle or forget them. Remember and consider how distant was the journey, which the grace of the Most High has made in order to call thee (Ps. 18, 7). Ponder in thy mind, how it has waited upon thee and consoled thee, assured thee in thy doubts, quieted thee in thy fears, ignored and pardoned thy faults, multiplied favors, caresses and blessings. I assure thee, my daughter, that thou must confess in thy heart, that the Most High has not done such things with any other generation; thou of thyself canst do nothing; thou art poor and more useless than others. Let then thy thanks be greater than that of all the creatures.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADVANCE OF THE SOUL TOWARD ITS GOD.

My dearest daughter, thou doubttest as one that loves me and askest as one not knowing. Consider then, that the perpetuity and durability of blessedness and felicity is destined for the saints, since their happiness is to be entirely perfect; if it would last only for some time, it would be wanting in the completeness and adequacy necessary for constituting it as the highest and most perfect happiness. At the same time it is incompatible with the common law and ordinary course, that the creature be glorified and at the same time be subject to sufferings, even though it be without sin. If this law did not hold good with my most holy Son (John 1, 18), it was because He was at the same time God and man and it was not befitting that his most holy soul, being hypostatically united with the Divinity, should be without the beatific vision; and as He was at the same time Redeemer of the human race, He could not suffer nor pay the debt of sin, that is pain, if He had not possessed a body capable of suffering. But I was a mere creature, and therefore I could have no claim to the vision, which to Him was due as a God. Moreover I could not be said to have permanently enjoyed the state of blessedness, because it was conceded to me from one time to another. Under these conditions I was capable of suffering at one time and enjoying blessedness at another; moreover it was more usual for me to suffer and to gain merits, than to be blessed, since I belonged to the viators and not to the comprehensors.

Justly the Most High has ordained, that the blessedness of eternal life should not be enjoyed in this mortal existence (Exod. 33, 20), and that immortality should be reached by passing through existence in a mortal body and by gaining merits in a state of suffering, such as is the present life of men (Rom. 6, 23). Although death in all the sons of Adam was the stipend and punishment of sin (Rom. 6, 23), and therefore death and all the other effects and chastisements had no rights in me, who had not sinned; yet the Most High ordained, that I also, in imitation of my most holy Son, should enter into felicity and eternal life by the death of the body (Luke 24, 26). There was nothing incongruous in this for me, but it afforded me many advantages, allowing me to follow the royal way of all men and gain many merits and great glory by suffering and dying. Another advantage resulted therefrom for men, for they saw that my most holy Son and I myself, who was his Mother, were truly human as they themselves, since we proved to them our mortality. Thereby the example, which we left them became much more efficacious and they would be induced to imitate the life, which we led and which redounded so much to the greater glory and exaltation of my Son and Lord, and of myself. All this would have come to nought, if the visions of the Divinity had been continuous in me. However, after I conceived the eternal Word, the benefits and favors were more frequent and greater, since I was then brought into close connection with Him. This is my answer to thy questions. No matter how much thou hast meditated and labored in manifesting the privileges and their effects enjoyed by me in mortal life, thou wilt never be able to comprehend all that the powerful arm of the Omnipotent wrought in me. And much less

canst thou describe in human words what thou hast understood.

Now attend to the instruction, which I will give thee regarding the preceding chapters. If I was the model to be imitated in the way I responded to the coming of God into the soul and into the world by showing due reverence, worship, humility, and thankful love, it follows, that if thou, (and in the same way the rest of the souls), art solicitous in imitating me, the Most High will come and produce the same effects in thee as in myself; though they may be not so great and efficacious. For if the creature, as soon as it obtains the use of reason, begins to advance toward the Lord as it should, directing its footsteps in the path of life and salvation, his Most High Majesty will issue forth to meet it, (Wis. 6, 15), being beforehand with his favors and communications; for to Him it seems a long time to wait for the end of the pilgrimage in order to manifest Himself to his friends.

Thus it happens, that by means of faith, hope and charity, and by the worthy reception of the Sacraments, many divine effects, wrought by his condescension, are communicated to the souls. Some are communicated according to the ordinary course of grace and others according to a more supernatural and wonderful order; and each one will be more or less conformable to the disposition of the soul and to the ends intended by the Lord, which are not known at present. And if the souls do not place any obstacle on their part, He will be just as liberal with them as with those who dispose themselves, giving them greater light and knowledge of his immutable being, and by a divine and exceedingly sweet infusion of grace, transforming them into a likeness of Himself and communicating to them many of

the privileges of the beatified. For after He is found He allows Himself to be taken possession of and enjoyed by that hidden embrace, which the Spouse felt, when She said: "I will hold Him and not dismiss Him" (Cant. 3, 4). Of this possession and of his presence the Lord himself will give many token and pledges, in order that the soul may possess Him in peace like the blessed, although always only for a limited time. So liberal as this will God, our Master and Lord, be in rewarding the objects of his love for the labors accepted by them for his sake and fearlessly undertaken to gain possession of Him.

In this sweet violence of love the creature begins to withdraw from and die to all earthly things; and that is why love is called strong as death. From this death arises a new spiritual life, which makes the soul capable of receiving new participations of the blessed and their gifts; for it enjoys more frequently the overshadowing of the Most High and the fruits of the highest Good, which it loves. These mysterious influences cause a sort of overflow into the interior and animal parts of the creature, producing a certain transparency and purifying it from the effects of the spiritual darknesses; it makes it courageous and as it were indifferent to suffering, ready to meet and endure all that is adverse to the inclinations of the flesh. With a certain subtle thirst it begins to seek after all the difficulty and violence incident to the attainment of the kingdom of heaven (Matth. 11, 12); it becomes alert and unhindered by earthly grossness, so that many times the body itself begins to feel this lightness in regard to its own self; the labors, which before seemed burdensome, become easy. Of all these effects thou hast knowledge and experience,

my daughter, and I have described and rehearsed them for thee, in order that thou mayest dispose thyself and labor so much the more earnestly; so that the divine activity and power of the Most High, in working out his pleasure in thee, may find thee well disposed and free from resistance and hindrance.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEEP REVERENCE IN DEALING WITH GOD.

My daughter, thou hast received my instruction until now in order to desire and strive after the heavenly science, which I wish thee so earnestly to acquire and which shall teach thee to understand profoundly, what decorous reverence is due to God. I remind thee once more, that this science is very hard to learn and little coveted by men on account of their ignorance; for thence, to their great loss, it arises that, in conversing with the Most High or rendering Him service or worship, they fail to form a worthy concept of his infinite greatness, and to free themselves from the darksome images of their earthly occupations, which make them torpid and carnal, unworthy and unfit for the magnificent intercourse with the supernal Deity. And this ill-bred coarseness entails another disorder: namely, that whenever they converse with their neighbors, they do it without order, measure or discretion, become entangled in their outward actions, and losing the memory and presence of their Creator in the excitement of their passions, are completely entangled in what is earthly.

I desire therefore, my dearest, that thou fly from this danger and learn the science, of the immutable being and infinite attributes of God. In such a way must thou study Him and unite thyself to Him, that no created being will come between thy soul and the true and highest Good. At all times and in all places, occupations and operations thou must keep Him in sight, without re-

leasing Him from the intimate embrace of thy heart (Cant. 3, 4). Therefore I command thee to treat Him with a magnanimous heart, with decorum and reverence, with deepfelt fear of the soul. And whatever pertains to his divine worship, I desire that thou handle with all attention and care. Above all in order to enter into his presence by prayer and petitions, free thyself from all sensible and earthly images. And since human frailty cannot always remain constant in the force of love, nor always experience the sweet violence of its movements on account of its earthly nature, thou shouldst seek other assistance, such as will help thee toward the same end of finding thy God. Such help, for instance, is afforded by his praise in the beauty of the heavens and of the stars, in the variety of the plants, in the pleasant vista of the fields, in the forces of the elements, and especially in the exalted nature of the angels and in the glory of his saints.

But bear continually in mind especially this particular caution, not to seek any earthly alleviation in any event or in any labor which thou art to undergo, and to indulge in any diversion coming from human creatures; and especially not in those coming from men, for on account of thy naturally weak and yielding character, so much adverse to giving pain, thou placest thyself in danger of exceeding and overstepping the limit of what is allowed or just, following, more than is proper for the religious spouses of my most holy Son, thy sensible likings. The risks of this negligence all the human creatures incur; for if full reins are given to frail human nature, it will not give heed to reason, not to the true light of the Spirit; but, forgetting them entirely, it will blindly follow the impulse of its passions and pleasures. Against this general danger is provided the enclosure and

retirement of the souls consecrated to my Son and Lord, in order to cut off the root of those unhappy and disgraceful occasions for those religious, who would willingly seek them and entangle themselves in them. Thy recreations, my dearest, and those of thy sister religious, must be free from such danger and deadly poison. Seek always those, which thou shalt find in the secret of thy breast and in the chamber of thy Beloved, who is faithful in consoling the sorrowful and in assisting the afflicted.

CHAPTER XV.

DILIGENCE IN FOLLOWING THE DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENTS.

My dearest daughter, many times I have confided and manifested to thee the love burning within my bosom: for I wish that it should be ardently re-enkindled within thy own, and that thou profit from the instruction, which I give thee. Happy is the soul, to which the Most High manifests his holy and perfect will; but more happy and blessed is he, who puts into execution, what he has learned. In many ways God shows to mortals the highways and pathways of eternal life: by the Gospels and the holy Scriptures, by the Sacraments and the laws of the holy Church, by the writings and examples of the saints, and especially, by the obedience due to the guidings of its ministers, of whom his Majesty said: "Whoever hears you, hears Me;" for obeying them is the same as obeying the Lord himself. Whenever by any of these means thou hast come to the knowledge of the will of God, I desire thee to assume the wings of humility and obedience, and, as if in ethereal flight or like the quickest sunbeam, hasten to execute it and thereby fulfill the divine pleasure.

Besides these means of instruction, the Most High has still others in order to direct the soul; namely, He intimates his perfect will to them in a supernatural manner, and reveals to them many sacraments. This kind of instruction is of many and different degrees; not all of them are common or ordinary to all souls; for the Lord dispenses his light in measure and weight (Wis.

11, 21). Sometimes He speaks to the heart and the interior feelings in commands; at others, in correction, advising or instructing: sometimes He moves the heart to ask Him; at other times He proposes clearly what He desires, in order that the soul may be moved to fulfill it; again He manifests, as in a clear mirror, great mysteries, in order that they may be seen and recognized by the intellect and loved by the will. But this great and infinite Good is always sweet in commanding, powerful in giving the necessary help for obedience, just in his commands, quick in disposing circumstances so that He can be obeyed, notwithstanding all the impediments which hinder the fulfillment of his most holy will.

In receiving this divine light, my daughter, I wish to see thee very attentive, and very quick and diligent in following it up in deed. In order to hear this most delicate and spiritual voice of the Lord it is necessary, that the faculties of the soul be purged from earthly grossness and that the creature live entirely according to the spirit; for the animal man does not perceive the elevated things of the Divinity (I Cor. 2, 14). Be attentive then to his secrets (Is. 34, 16) and forget all that is of the outside; listen, my daughter, and incline thy ear; free thyself from all visible things (Ps. 44, 11). And in order that thou mayest be diligent, cultivate love; for love is a fire, which does not have its effect until the material is prepared; therefore let thy heart always be disposed and prepared. Whenever the Most High bids thee or communicates to thee anything for the welfare of souls, or especially for their eternal salvation, devote thyself to it entirely; for they are bought at the inestimable price of the blood of the Lamb and of divine love. Do not allow thyself to be hindered in this matter by thy own lowliness and bashfulness; but overcome the

fear which restrains thee, for if thou thyself art of small value and usefulness, the Most High is rich (I Pet. 1, 18), powerful, great, and by Himself performs all things (Rom. 10, 12). Thy promptness and affection will not go without its reward, although I wish thee rather to be moved entirely by the pleasure of thy Lord.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUBJECTION TO GOD'S WILL.

My daughter, whenever the creature holds in proper esteem the good works and the services, which the Lord commands for his glory, it will feel within itself great facility of operation, great sweetness in undertaking them, and a readiness and alacrity in continuing and pursuing them. These different feelings then give testimony of their being truly useful and commanded by God. But the soul cannot experience these affections, if it is not altogether devoted to the Lord, keeping its gaze fixed upon his divine pleasure, hearing of it with joy, executing it with alacrity and forgetting its own inclination and conveniences. The soul must be like the faithful servant, who seeks to do only the will of his master and not his own. This is the manner of obeying, which is fruitful and which is due from all the creatures to their God and much more from all the religious, who explicitly promise this kind of obedience. In order that thou, my dearest, mayest attain to it perfectly, remember with what esteem David in many places speaks of the precepts (Ps. 118), of the sayings and of the justifications of the Lord; and remember the effects, which they caused in that Prophet and even now in the souls. He says that they make the infants wise (Ps. 18, 8), rejoice the heart of men (Ps. 18, 9), that they enlighten the eyes of the soul, so that they become a most brilliant light for its footsteps (Ps. 118, 105), that

they are more sweet than honey (Ps. 18, 11), more desirable and more estimable than the most precious stones. This promptitude and subjection to the divine will and to his laws made David so conformable to the heart of God. These are the kind of souls his Majesty seeks for his servants and friends (I Kings 13, 14, Acts 13, 22).

Attend therefore, my daughter, with all solicitude to the works of virtue and perfection, which thou knowest to be desirable in the eyes of the Lord. Despise none of them nor withdraw from any of them and cease not to exercise them, no matter how violently thy inclinations and thy weakness should oppose their exercise. Trust in the Lord and proceed to put them into execution, and soon his power will overcome all difficulties. Soon thou wilt also know by happy experience how light is the burden and how sweet is the yoke of the Lord (Matth. 11, 13). He did not deceive us when He spoke those words, as might be argued by the tepid and the negligent, who in their torpidity and distrust, tacitly repudiate the truth of this statement. I wish also that thou, in order to imitate me in this perfection, take notice of the favor, which the divine condescension vouchsafed me in furnishing me with a most sweet love and affection for the creatures as participators in the divine goodness and existence. In this love I sought to console, alleviate and enliven all the souls; and by a natural compassion I procured all spiritual and corporeal goods for them; to none of them, no matter how great sinners they might have been, did I wish any evil; on the contrary I was urged by the great compassion of my tender heart to procure for them eternal salvation. From this also arose my anxiety concerning the grief, which was to grow out of my pregnancy to

my spouse saint Joseph; for to him I owed more than to all other creatures. Tender compassion filled my heart, especially for the suffering and the infirm, and I tried to obtain some relief for all. In these virtues then I wish that thou, making use of the knowledge of them given to thee, most prudently imitate me.

CHAPTER XVII.

SANCTIFYING GRACE.

My daughter, in order that thy heart may be ever more and more inflamed with the desire of gaining the grace and friendship of God, I wish very much that thou grow in the knowledge of the dignity, excellence and happiness of a soul, that has been endowed with this privilege; however, remember that it is so admirable and of so great a value that thou canst not comprehend it, even if I would explain it to thee; and much less canst thou express it in words. Look upon the Lord and contemplate Him by means of the divine light, which thou receivest, and then thou wilt understand that the Lord performs a greater work in justifying a soul than in having created all the orbs of heaven and the whole earth with all the beauty and perfection contained within them. And if on account of the wonders which creatures are able in part to perceive in these works by the senses, they are impressed with the greatness and power of God, what would they say and think if they could see with the eyes of their soul the preciousness and beauty of grace in so many creatures, who are capable of receiving them?

There are no terms of human language equal to the task of expressing what participations and perfections of God are contained in sanctifying grace. It is little to say that it is more pure and spotless than the snow; more refulgent than the sun; more precious than gold or precious stones, more charming, more amiable

and pleasing than all the most delightful feasts and entertainments, and more beautiful than all that in its entirety can be imagined or desired by the creatures. Take notice also of the ugliness of sin, in order that by the opposite thou mayest come to so much the better understanding of the beauty of grace; for neither darknesses, nor rottenness, nor the most horrible, the most dreadful, nor the foulest of creatures can ever be compared to sin and to its ugliness. The martyrs and saints understood much of this mystery (Heb. 11, 36), who in order to secure the beauty of grace and preserve themselves from the ruin of sin, did not fear fire, nor wild beasts, nor the sword, nor torments, nor prisons, ignominies, pains, afflictions, nor death itself, nor prolonged and perpetual suffering; for to escape all these must be counted for little or nothing, and must scarcely be thought of in comparison with one degree of grace, which souls may attain, even though they be the most abject of the whole world. All this the men, who esteem and seek after the fugitive and apparent beauty of creatures, are ignorant of; and whatever does not present to them this deceitful beauty, is for them vile and contemptible.

Thou perceivest therefore something of the greatness of the blessing, which the incarnate Word conferred upon his Precursor in the womb of his mother; and because saint John recognized it, he leaped for joy and exultation in the womb of his mother. Thou wilt also see what thou thyself must do and suffer in order to attain this happiness, and in order not to lose, or in the least impair this most precious beauty by any fault, nor retard its consummation by any imperfection, no matter how small. I wish that in imitation of my cousin Elisabeth, thou do not enter into any friendship with any human creatures, except those, with whom thou

canst and shouldst converse about the works of the Most High and of his mysteries, and with whom thou canst learn to pursue the true path of his divine pleasure. Although thou art engaged in important undertakings and works, do not forget or omit thy spiritual exercises and the strictness of a perfect life; for this must not only be preserved and watched over, when all things go smoothly, but also under the greatest adversity, difficulty and labor; for imperfect human nature takes occasion of the slightest circumstance to relax its vigilance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OBEDIENCE AND SUBJECTION TO OTHERS.

My daughter, the favors of the Most High and the knowledge of his divine mysteries, in the attentive souls, engender a kind of love and esteem of humility, which raises them up with a strong and sweet force, like that which causes fire to ascend, like the gravity which causes a stone to fall, each of them striving to reach its own and natural sphere. This is done by the true light, which places the creature in the possession of a clear knowledge of its own self and attributes the graces to the proper source, whence all perfect things come (James 1, 17); and thus it brings all things into correct balance. And this is the most proper order of right reason which overthrows and as it were exerts violence against the false presumption of mortals. On account of this presumption of pride the heart, wherein it lives, cannot strive after contempt, nor bear it, nor can it suffer a superior over itself, and is offended even at equals; it violently opposes all in order to place itself alone above all fellow creatures. But the humble heart is abased in proportion to the benefits it received, and in its interior quietly grows a desire or an ardent hunger for self-abasement and for the last place; it is violently disturbed in not finding itself esteemed as the inferior of all and in being deprived of humiliation.

In me, my dearest, thou wilt find exhibited the practical application of this doctrine; since none of the favors and blessings, which the right hand of the Most

High lavished upon me, were insignificant. Yet never was my heart inflated with presumption above itself (Ps. 110, 1), nor did it ever know anything else than to desire to be abased and occupy the last place among all creatures. The imitation of this I desire especially of thee; let thy ambition be to take the last place, to live in subjection to all others; abased and considered as useless, in the presence of the Lord and of men, thou must judge thyself as less than the dust of the earth itself. Thou canst not deny, that in no generation has any one been more favored than thou, and no one has merited these favors less than thou. How then wilt thou make any return for this great debt of gratitude if thou dost not humiliate thyself below all others and more than all the sons of Adam; and if thou dost not awaken within thyself exalted and loving sentiments concerning humility? It is good to obey the prelates and instructors, therefore do it always. But I desire that thou go much farther, and that thou obey the most insignificant of thy fellow beings in all that is not sinful, and in such a way, as if thou wert obeying the highest of thy superiors; and I desire that in this matter thou be very earnest, as I was during my earthly life.

Thou must, however, be circumspect in regard to the obedience to thy inferiors, so that they may not, knowing of thy anxiousness to obey in all things, seek to induce thee to obey in things unseemly and unbecoming. Thou canst do much good by giving them the good and orderly example of obedience, without causing them to lose any of their subjection and without derogating from thy authority as their superioress. If any disagreeable accident or injury should happen, which affects thee alone, accept it gladly, without so much as moving thy lips in self-defense, or making

any complaints. Whatever is an injury to God do thou reprehend without mixing up any of thy own grievances with those of his Majesty; for thou shouldst never find any cause for self defense, but always be ready to defend the honor of God. But neither in the one nor the other, allow thyself to be moved by disorderly anger and passion. I wish also, that thou use great prudence in hiding and concealing the favors of the Lord, for the sacrament of the King is not to be lightly manifested (Tob. 12, 7), nor are carnal men capable or worthy of the mysteries of the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 2, 14). In all things imitate and follow me, since thou wishest to be my beloved daughter; this thou wilt attain by obeying me and thou wilt induce the Almighty to strengthen and direct thy footsteps to that which I desire to accomplish in thee. Do not resist Him, but dispose and prepare thy heart sweetly and quickly to obey his light and grace. Let grace not be void in thee (II Cor. 6, 1), but labor diligently and let thy actions be performed in all perfection.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VALUE OF HUMBLE OCCUPATIONS.

My daughter, in order to solve thy difficulty more explicitly than as already noted down in the foregoing chapter, thou must remember that no occupation or exterior act pertaining to virtue, no matter how lowly it may be, can, if it is well-ordered, impede the worship, reverence and exaltation of the Creator of all things; for these acts of virtue do not exclude one another; but they are all compatible with one another in the creature, and much more in me, who lived in the continual presence of the highest Good without ever losing It out of sight by exterior activity. I adored and remembered God in all my actions, referring them all to his greater glory; and the Lord himself, who orders and creates all things, despises none of them, nor is He offended, or irritated by their smallness. The soul that loves Him, is not disconcerted by any of these little things in his divine presence; for it seeks and finds Him as the beginning and the end of all creatures. And because terrestrial creatures cannot exist without these humble performances and without others that are inseparable from our lowly condition and the preservation of our nature, it is necessary to understand this doctrine well, in order that we may be governed by it. For if we engage in these thoughts and occupations without reference to their Creator, they will cause many and great interruptions in the practice of virtue and in our merits, as well as in the right use of interior advantages. Our whole life will be

blameworthy and full of reprehensible defects, little removed from the earthliness of creatures.

According to this doctrine thou must so regulate thy terrestrial occupations, whatever they may be, that thou do not lose thy time, which can never be recovered. Whether thou eat, labor, rest, sleep, or watch, in all times and places, and in all occupations, adore, reverence and look upon thy great and powerful Lord, who fills all things and conserves all things (I Cor. 10, 3; Matth. 11, 29). I wish also that thou pay special attention to that which moved and incited me most to perform all acts of humility; namely, the thought that my divine Son came in the guise of humility in order to teach the world this virtue in word and example, to inculcate the hate of vanity and pride and rooting out its seed sown by Lucifer among mortals in the first sin. His Majesty gave me such a deep knowledge of how much He is pleased with this virtue, that in order to be allowed to perform only one of the acts mentioned by thee, such as sweeping the floor or kissing the feet of the poor, I would have been ready to suffer the greatest torments of the world. Thou wilt never find words to express the love for humility which I had, nor to describe its excellence and nobility. In the Lord thou wilt know and understand what thou canst not describe in words.

But write this doctrine in thy heart and observe it as the rule of thy life; continue to exercise thyself in the contempt of all things belonging to human vanity, and esteem them as odious and execrable in the eyes of the Most High. But in connection with this humility of thy life, let thy thoughts always be of the noblest and thy conversation in heaven and with the angelic spirits (Philip 3, 20); deal with them and converse with them

in order to obtain new light concerning the Divinity and the mysteries of Christ my most holy Son. With creatures let thy intercourse be such as will continually increase thy fervor and serve thee as means of advancing and profiting by means of humility and divine love. In thy own mind assume the lowest place beneath all creatures, so that when the occasion and the time of exercising the acts of humility arrive, thou mayest be found prompt and willing to exercise them. Only then wilt thou be the mistress of the passions, if first thou hast acknowledged thyself in thy heart as the least and weakest and most useless of all the creatures.

CHAPTER XX.

FRATERNAL CHARITY.

My dearest daughter, within two limits, as if within two extremes, all the harmony of thy powers and wishes must move. They are: to preserve thyself in the grace and friendship of God, and to seek the same good fortune for others. In this let all thy life and activity be consumed. For such high purpose I wish that thou spare no labor, beseeching the Lord and offering thyself in sacrifice unto death, accepting actually all that is opportune and possible. Although, in order to solicit the good of souls, thou need not make any great ado before creatures, since that is not appropriate to thy sex; yet thou must seek and prudently apply all the hidden means, that are most efficacious within thy knowledge. If thou wilt be my daughter and a spouse of my most holy Son, consider that the possessions of our house are the rational creatures, which He acquired as a rich prize at the cost of his life (I Cor. 20) and of his blood; for through their own disobedience they were lost to Him (Gen. 3, 6), after He had created and selected them for Himself.

Hence whenever the Lord sends to thee, or throws in thy way, a needy soul and makes thee aware of its state, labor faithfully to assist it. Pray and weep with heartfelt and fervent love, that God may furnish the remedy for such great and dangerous evil, and do not neglect any means, divine or human, as far as thou art concerned, in order to obtain the salvation of eternal

life for the soul entrusted to thee. By means of the prudence and moderation which I have taught thee, thou must not grow weary in admonishing, nor in praying for that which will benefit that soul; and in all secrecy continue thy labor in its behalf. Likewise I wish, that whenever it is necessary, thou command the demons in the powerful name of the Almighty and my own, to depart and leave in peace the souls oppressed by them; and as all this is to be done in secret, thou canst in all propriety animate and encourage thyself to this kind of work. Remember that the Lord has placed thee, and will place thee in a position to exercise this doctrine. Do not forget it, nor fail in understanding, how much thou art bounden to his Majesty to use care and solicitude in extending the possessions of thy Father's house. Do not rest until thou accustom thyself to do this with all diligence (Phil. 4, 13). Fear not, for thou canst do all in Him that strengthens thee; and his power will strengthen thy arm to do great things (Prov. 31, 27).

CHAPTER XXI.

HUMBLE PETITIONS.

My daughter, whenever our desires arise from loving affection and are accompanied by a good intention, the Most High is not offended at our making them known, as long as it is done with submission and resignation to the dispositions of his divine Providence. When the soul presents itself before the Lord with such sentiments, He looks upon it as a Father and grants to it what is proper, withholds what is improper or does not conduce to its true welfare. The desire of my cousin to remain with me all her life arose from a pious and praiseworthy zeal; but it was not in harmony with the plans of the Most High, by which He had already arranged the conduct, travels and events of my life. Though the Lord denied her this request He was not displeased, but granted her whatever would not hinder the decrees of his infinite wisdom and whatever would benefit her or her son John. On account of the love shown toward me by the mother and son, and on account of my intercession, the Almighty enriched them with many blessings and favors. For to ask Him with upright intention and through my mediation, is always the most efficacious means of moving his Majesty.

I wish that thou offer up all thy petitions and prayers in the name of my most holy Son and my own; and be assured without doubt, that they will be heard, if they are joined with the upright intention of pleasing God. Look upon me with loving affection as thy Mother,

thy refuge and thy help; trust thyself to my devoted love, and remember, my dearest, that my desire for thy greater good urges me to teach thee the means of obtaining great blessings and favors of divine grace at the most liberal hands of God. Do not make thyself unfit for them, nor hinder them by thy timidity. And if thou wishest to induce me to love thee as my much-beloved daughter, rouse thyself to a fulfillment of what I tell thee and manifest to thee. Toward this direct thy careful efforts, resting satisfied only when thou hast labored hard to put my teachings into practice.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DANGERS OF MORTAL LIFE.

My dearest daughter, do not be surprised, that my servant John feared and hesitated to come into the world. Life can never be loved by the ignorant devotee of the world in the same degree, as the wise, in divine science, abhor and fear its dangers. This science was eminently possessed by the Precursor of my most holy Son; hence knowing of the loss which threatened, he feared the risk. But, since he that knows and dreads the treacherous seas of this world, sails so much the more securely over their unfathomed depths, it served him in good stead for entering securely into the world. The fortunate child began his career with such disgust and abhorrence of all earthly things, that his horror never abated. He made no peace with the flesh (Mark 6, 17), nor partook of its poison, nor allowed vanity to enter his senses nor obstruct his eyes; in abhorrence of the world and of worldly things, he gave his life for justice. The citizen of the true Jerusalem cannot be in peace or in alliance with Babylon; nor is it possible to enjoy at the same time the grace of the Most High and the friendship of his declared enemies; for no one can serve two hostile masters, nor can light and darkness, Christ and Beliel, harmonize (Matth. 4, 4).

Guard thyself, my dearest, against those living in darkness and the lovers of the world more than against fire; for the wisdom of the sons of this world is carnal and diabolical, and their ways lead to death. In order

to walk the way of truth, even at the cost of the natural life, it is necessary to preserve the peace of the soul. Three dwelling-places I point out for thee to live in, from which thou must never intentionally come forth. If at any time the Lord should bid thee to relieve the necessities of thy fellow creatures, I desire that thou do not lose this refuge. Act as one who lives in a castle surrounded by enemies, and who perchance must go to the gate to transact necessary business. He acts with such wariness, that he will pay more attention to safeguard his retreat and shield himself, than to transact business with others, being always on the watch and on guard against danger. So must thou live, if thou wishest to live securely; for doubt not, that enemies more cruel and poisonous than asps and basilisks surround thee.

Thy habitations shall be the Divinity of the Most High, the humanity of my most holy Son, and thy own interior. In the Divinity thou must live like the pearl in its shell, or like the fish in the sea, allowing thy desires and affections to roam in its infinite spaces. The most holy humanity shall be the wall, which defends thee; and his bosom shall be the place of thy rest, and under his wings shalt thou find refreshment (Ps. 16, 8). Thy own interior shall afford thee peaceful delight through the testimony of a good conscience (Cor. 2, 12), and it will, if thou keep it pure, familiarize thee with the sweet and friendly intercourse of thy Spouse. In order that thou mayest be aided therein by retirement of the body, I desire that thou remain secluded in thy choir or in thy cell, leaving it only, when obedience or charity make it inevitable. I will tell thee a secret: there are demons, whom Lucifer has expressly ordered to watch for the religious, who come forth from their retire-

ment, in order to beset them and engage them in battle and cause their fall. The demons do not easily go into the cells, because there they do not find the occasions afforded by conversations and the use of the senses, wherein they ordinarily capture and devour their prey like ravenous wolves. They are tormented by the retirement and recollection of religious, knowing that they are foiled in their attempts, as long as they cannot entice them into human discourse.

It is also certain that ordinarily the demons have no power over souls, unless they gain entrance by some venial or mortal fault. Mortal sin gives them a sort of direct right over those who commit it; while venial sin weakens the strength of the soul and invites their attacks. Imperfections diminish the merit and the progress of virtue, and encourage the enemy. Whenever the astute serpent notices that the soul bears with its own levity and forgets about its danger, it blinds it and seeks to instill its deadly poison. The enemy then entices the soul like a little heedless bird, until it falls into one of the many snares from which there seems to be no escape.

Admire then, my daughter, what thou hast learned by divine enlightenment and weep in deepest sorrow over the ruin of so many souls absorbed in such dangerous tepidity. They live in the obscurity of their passions and depraved inclinations, forgetful of the danger, unmoved by their losses, and heedless of their dealings. Instead of fearing and avoiding the occasions of evil, they encounter and seek for them in blind ignorance. In senseless fury they follow their pleasures, place no restraint on their passionate desires, and care not where they walk, even if to the most dangerous precipices. They are surrounded by innumerable

enemies, who pursue them with diabolical treachery, unceasing vigilance, unquenchable wrath and restless diligence. What wonder then, that from such extremes, or rather from such unequal combat, irreparable defeats should arise among the mortals? And that, since the number of fools is infinite, the number of the reprobate should also be uncountable, and that the demon should be inflated by his triumphs in the perdition of so many men? May the eternal God preserve thee from such a misfortune; and do thou weep and deplore that of thy brethren, continually asking for their salvation as far as is possible.

CHAPTER XXIII.

REVERENCE DUE TO PRIESTS.

For two reasons, my daughter, the divine effects wrought through me by my Son in saint John and Elisabeth were concealed, while those in Zacharias were manifest. First, because Elisabeth spoke out clearly in praise of the incarnate Word and of me; yet at the time it was not proper that either this mystery or my dignity should be openly known; the coming of the Messias was to be manifested by other more appropriate means. Secondly, not all hearts were so well prepared as that of Elisabeth for receiving such precious and unprecedented seed of divine knowledge, nor would they have welcomed such sacramental revelation with due reverence. On the other hand it was more becoming that Zacharias in his priestly dignity should proclaim what was then to be made known; for the beginnings of the heavenly light would be accepted more readily from him than from saint Elisabeth, especially while he was present. That which she said, was reserved to bring forth its effects in due time. Although the words of God have their own inherent force; yet the more sweet and acceptable manner of communicating with the ignorant and the unskilled in divine mysteries is by means of the priest.

Likewise it was proper that the dignity and honor of the priesthood should receive its due; for the Most High holds the priests in such esteem, that if He finds them in the right disposition, He exalts them and fills them with his Spirit in order that the world may

venerate them as his chosen and anointed ones. Moreover the wonders of the Lord run less risk in priests, even when they are more openly revealed to them. If they live up to their dignity, their works in comparison with those of the other creatures, are like those of the angels and of the seraphim. Their countenance should be resplendent, like that of Moses, when he came forth from converse with the Lord (Exod. 34, 29). At least they should deal with the rest of men in such a manner that they be honored and revered as next to God. I desire that thou understand, my dearest, that the Most High is greatly incensed against the world in this matter: as well against the priests as against laymen. Against the priests because, forgetting their exalted dignity, they debase themselves by a contemptible, degraded and scandalous life, giving bad example to the world by mixing up with it to the neglect of their sanctification. And against the laymen, because they act with a foolhardy presumption toward the anointed of the Lord, whom, though imperfect and blameless in their lives, they ought to honor and revere as taking the place of Christ, my most holy Son, on earth.

On account of this reverence due to the priesthood my behavior toward saint Zacharias was different from that toward Elisabeth. For, although the Lord wished, that I should be the instrument, by which the gifts of the holy Spirit should be communicated to both; yet I saluted Elisabeth in such a manner, that I at the same time showed a certain authority, exerting my power over the original sin of her son; for at my words this sin was forgiven him, and both mother and son were filled with the Holy Ghost. As I had not contracted original sin and was exempt from it, I possessed dominion over it on this occasion: I commanded as the

Mistress, who had triumphed over it by the help of the Lord (Gen. 3, 5), and who was no slave of it, as all the sons of Adam, who sinned in him (Rom. 5, 12). Therefore the Lord desires that, in order to free John from the slavery and chains of sin, I should command over it as one who never was subject to its bondage. I did not salute Zacharias in this authoritative way, but I prayed for him, observing the reverence and decorum due to his dignity and my modesty. I would not have commanded the tongue of the priest to be loosened, not even mentally and secretly, if the Most High had not enjoined it upon me, intimating at the same time, that the defect of speech hardly suited his office, for a priest should stand ready to serve and praise the Almighty with all his powers. In regard to the respect due to priests I will tell thee more on another occasion; let this suffice at present for the solution of thy doubt.

But from my instruction today learn especially to seek direction in the way of virtue and of eternal life in all thy intercourse with men, be they above or below thee in dignity. Imitate therein me and my cousin Elisabeth, with due discretion asking all to direct thee and guide thee; for in return for such humility the Lord will provide thee with secure counsel and divine light for exercising thy discreet and sincere love of virtue. Drive away, or do not allow thyself to be influenced by even the least breath of flattery and avoid the conversations which expose thee to it; for such deceitful pleasure darkens the light and perverts the unsuspecting mind. The Lord is so jealous of the souls especially beloved by Him, that He will immediately turn away from them if they find pleasure in the praises of men and seek to recompense themselves by their flatteries; since by this levity they become unworthy of his favors. It is not

possible to unite in a soul the adulations of the world and the caresses of the Most High. For these latter are sincere, holy, pure, and lasting: they humiliate, cleanse, pacify and illumine the heart; while on the other hand the flatteries of creatures are vain, fleeting, deceitful, impure and false, issuing from the mouths of those who are all liars (Ps. 115, 11); and whatever is deceitful is a work of the enemy.

Thy Spouse, my dearest daughter, does not wish thy ears to be enthralled by deceitful earthly talk, nor contaminated by the flatteries of the world. Therefore I desire that thou keep them closed and well guarded against all these poisonous influences. If thy Lord is pleased to speak to thy heart the words of eternal life, it is proper that thou thyself be deaf and lifeless to all that is earthly. All else should be to thee a deadly torment in comparison with the caresses of his love. Remember that thou owest Him the perfection of thy love, and that all hell will combine against thee, in order to ensnare thee by thy natural tenderness to be sweet and loving toward creatures, and less grateful to the eternal God. Watch over thyself, and see that thou resist this unfaithfulness, trusting in thy beloved Master and Spouse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RESIGNATION.

My daughter, the happy souls which God has chosen for his intimate friendship and perfection must keep themselves in continual readiness and peace, in order to perform all that his Majesty may ordain without hesitation or delay. That is what I did when the Most High commanded me to leave the beloved retreat of my house and betake myself to Elisabeth; likewise, when he ordered me to return. I obeyed in all these things with joyful alacrity; and although I had received so many benefits from Elisabeth and her family and so many tokens of love and friendship, as thou hast seen, yet, knowing the will of the Lord, I set aside all obligation and my own inclination and followed them only so far as was strictly demanded by charity and compassion, and in so far as the promptest obedience to the divine command permitted.

My dearest daughter, how wilt thou not hasten to obtain this true and perfect resignation as soon as thou knowest its vast value! How pleasing it is in the eyes of the Lord, and how profitable for thy soul! Labor then to attain it in imitation of me, as I have already so often invited thee and urged thee. The greatest hindrances toward its attainment are the leanings and special likings to earthly things; for these make the soul unworthy of the caresses of the Lord and of knowing fully his will. And even if the soul knows his will, the

base love of unworthy things will keep the soul from fulfilling it; for on account of its inclinations, it will be wanting in the ready and joyful obedience required by the Lord. Take notice of this danger, my daughter, and do not allow any particular affection to enter into thy heart, for I wish that thou be well versed and perfect in this art of divine love, and that thy obedience be that of an angel, and thy love that of a seraphim. Thus show thyself in all thy actions, for to this my love urges thee, and thus art thou taught by the knowledge and light imparted to thee.

I do not say that thou must do away with all sensible feeling, for that is not naturally possible to the creature; but whenever thou meetest adverse happenings, or when thou art deprived of what is useful, necessary or agreeable thou must bear it with joyful resignation and give praise to the Lord, because his will is being fulfilled in thy regard. By seeking only his pleasure, and considering all else as of passing moment, thou wilt gain a quick and easy victory over thyself, and thou wilt seek all occasions to humiliate thyself under the mighty hand of the Lord (I Pet. 5, 6). I also exhort thee to imitate me in my esteem and veneration of the priests, and that thou always ask their blessing before speaking to them and in leaving them. Do this also in regard to the Most High before beginning any work. Toward thy superiors always show thyself devoted and submissive. If any married women come to seek thy advice, exhort them to be obedient to their husbands (Tit. 5, 2), peacefully subjecting themselves, living retired in their houses and carefully fulfilling their obligations toward their families. Tell them not to give themselves up entirely to their occupations, nor to lose themselves in their daily

cares on pretext of necessity; for much more must be trusted to the goodness and liberality of God than to one's own immoderate bustle and activity. In whatever happened to me in my condition, thou wilt find true instruction and example; and my whole life will be an example of perfection for the guidance of souls, and therefore I will not need to give thee further direction.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

My daughter, the faithful souls and children of the Church, who know God, must make no distinction of time, place or occasions in the practice of faith and the other virtues connected with it. For God is present in all things and fills them with his infinite being (Jer. 23, 24), and in all places and circumstances faith will enable them to see and adore Him in spirit and in truth (John 4, 22). Just as preservation follows upon creation, and as breathing follows upon life, and just as there is no intermission in the breathing, nourishment and growth of man until the end is reached: so the rational creature, after having been regenerated by faith of grace, must never interrupt the course of the spiritual life, continually pursuing works of life by faith, hope and charity in all places and at all time (James 2, 26). On account of their forgetfulness and carelessness, the children of men, and especially the members of the Church, possess the life of faith as if they had lost it, allowing it to die for want of charity. These are the ones who have received in vain this their new soul, as David says, because they neglect it as if they had never obtained it (Psalm 23, 4).

I desire, my dearest, that thy spiritual life be just as continual as thy natural life. Thou must continue to lead a life such as is required by the grace and gifts of the Most High, believing and hoping in the Lord, loving,

praising and adoring Him in spirit and in truth, no matter what changes there may be in time, occupation or place, He is in all things and He wishes to be loved and served by all rational creatures. I therefore charge thee that whenever souls come to thee full of this forgetfulness of their faults, and harassed by the demons, thou pray for them with lively faith and confidence. If the Lord does not always fulfill what thou desirest and what they ask, He will follow his own secret counsel, and thou wilt have pleased Him by having acted as a true spouse and daughter. If thou faithfully followest my instructions, I assure thee that He will confer upon thee many special privileges for the benefit of souls. Consider what I did at the sight of souls displeasing to the Lord, and how zealously I worked for all, and for some in particular. To imitate and oblige me, do thou likewise work and pray for those whose interior becomes known to thee through the Lord or through other means; admonish them with prudence, humility and resignation; for the Almighty does not desire thee to proceed noisily, nor that the results of thy labors be always manifest, but that they remain hidden. In this He conforms Himself to thy naturally retiring disposition and to thy desires, and He seeks what is most secure for thee. And, although thou must pray for all souls, yet thou must pray more earnestly for those whom the divine will points out to thee.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MALICE OF THE DEVIL.

My daughter, I wish that thou be very cautious and watchful in regard to the ignorance and darkness, by which the demon commonly ensnares mortals and makes them forget their eternal salvation and the continual danger of its loss through his persecutions. Men are lost in forgetful rest and sleep, as if there were no vigilant and powerful enemies. This dreadful carelessness arises from two causes: on the one hand men are so taken up with their earthly and sensible being (I Cor. 2, 14), that they do not feel any other evils except those concerning the animal nature in them; all that is interior is harmless in their estimation. On the other hand, since the princes of darkness are invisible and unperceived by any of the senses (Ephes. 6, 12) and since carnal men neither touch, nor feel, nor see them, they forget the fear of them. Yet for this very reason they ought to be more attentive and careful, since invisible enemies are more cunning and adroit in injuring us by their treachery. So much the more certain is the danger, the more concealed it is, and so much the more deadly are the wounds, the less they are felt and recognized.

Listen, my daughter, to most important truths concerning eternal life. Attend to my counsels, follow my instructions and receive my warnings; for if thou pass them by unheeded, I will cease to speak to thee. Hear what thou hast not until now known of the disposition of these enemies. I wish to make known to thee

that no intellect, nor any tongue of man or angels can describe the wrath and fury which Lucifer and his demons entertain against mortals just because they are images of God and because they are capable of enjoying Him for all eternity. The Lord alone can comprehend the wicked malice of these proud and rebellious spirits against his holy name and against his worship. If these foes were not restrained by his almighty arm they would in one moment destroy the world; they would like famishing lions, like wild beasts and fierce dragons, despatch all mankind and tear them to pieces. Now however the most kind Father of all mercies wards off and curbs their wrath and He bears his little children in his arms in order that they may not fall a prey to these hellish wolves.

Consider then, as seriously as thou canst, whether anything deserves greater pity, than to see so many men misled into danger and made forgetful of it; how some of them cast themselves into it on account of their lightheartedness, some of them for trivial reasons, others for a short and instantaneous pleasure, others through negligence, and yet others on account of their inordinate appetites, tearing themselves away from the places of refuge, in which the Almighty has placed them, to fall into the hands of such cruel and furious enemies; and not only to feel their fury for an hour, a day, a month, or a year, but to suffer indescribable and unmeasured torments for all eternity. Thou shouldst be filled with fear and wonder, my daughter, to see such horrible and dreadful foolishness among the impenitent mortals and to see even the faithful, who have come to know and confess all this by faith, so far lose their understanding and allow themselves to be so insanely blinded by the devil that they neither regard nor avoid this danger.

In order that thou mayest fear it and preserve thyself the better, remember that this dragon knows thee and lurks about thee ever since the hour of thy creation and entrance into this world. Night and day he restlessly prowls about seeking some chance of capturing thee as a prize. He observes thy natural inclinations and also the gifts of the Lord, in order to combat thee with thy own weapons. He charges other demons with thy ruin and promises reward to those that are more diligent in securing it. They weigh thy actions carefully, watch thy footsteps, and work zealously to lay snares for thee in all thy undertakings. I desire thee to meditate on these truths in the Lord, who will show thee whither they lead; compare them afterwards with thy own experience and thou wilt understand, whether thou hast any occasion for sleep in the midst for such dangers. Although this watchfulness is important for all the woman-born, it is more necessary to thee than to others for especial reasons: and if I do not mention them all to thee now, do not doubt, that thou must live with great vigilance and caution. It suffices to remind thee of thy soft and yielding nature, which thy enemies will strive to make use of for thy destruction.

CHAPTER XXVII.

VICTORY OVER SATAN.

My daughter, although thou hast only very briefly summed up my lengthy battle against temptations, I wish that from what thou hast written and from what thou knowest otherwise concerning these things, thou learn the manner of resisting and overcoming the powers of hell. The surest way of fighting the demon is to despise him, looking upon him as the enemy of the Most High, who has lost all fear of God and all hope of good; who in his stubbornness has deprived himself of all means of recovery and is without sorrow for his wickedness. Relying on this indubitable truth thou shouldst show thyself far superior to him, exalted and unflinching in thy thoughts, and treat him as a contemner of the honor and worship of his God. Knowing that thou art defending so just a cause, do not let thy courage sink; but resist and counteract him with great strength and valor in all his attempts, as if thou wert fighting at the side of the Lord himself; for there is no doubt that his Majesty assists all those that enter loyally into his battles. Thou art truly in good hope and in the way of eternal life glory, as long as thou laborest faithfully for thy Lord and God.

Remember then, that the demons detest and abominate that which thou desirest and lovest, namely the honor of God and thy eternal felicity; and that they are striving to deprive thee of that which they cannot restore to themselves. God has reprobated the demon,

while He offers to thee his grace, his virtues and his strength in order to overcome his and thy enemy and to procure for thee the happy end of eternal peace; only thou must work faithfully and keep the commandments of the Lord. The arrogance of the dragon is great (Is. 16, 6), yet his weakness is greater; and he does not represent more than a weak atom in the face of the divine power. Yet as his cunning and malice far exceed that of mortals (Job 41, 21), it is not advisable to allow the soul to bandy words with him, whether he is present invisibly or visibly; for from his darksome mind, as from a smoking furnace, issue the shadows of confusion, obscuring the judgments of mortals; if they listen to him, he will fill their minds with deceits and darkness, so that they will neither recognize the truth and the beauty of virtue, nor the vileness of his poisonous falsehoods. Thus the souls will be made unable to distinguish the precious from the worthless, life from death, truth from error (Jer. 15, 19), and they easily fall into the clutches of this fierce and wicked dragon.

In temptation let it be thy invariable course not to attend to anything which he proposes, not to listen, not to argue with him concerning aught. If thou canst withdraw and place thyself at a distance, so as not to perceive or recognize his wicked attempts, so much the more secure thou wilt be for thus looking upon him only at a distance. The demon always seeks to prepare the way for his deceits, especially in souls which he fears will resist his entrance unless he can thus facilitate his approach. He is accustomed to begin by causing sorrow or dejection of heart, or he makes use of other trickery or snares, by which he diverts or withdraws the soul from the love of the Lord; then he comes with his poison, concealed in the golden cup in order to diminish the horror

of the soul. As soon as thou noticest in thyself any of these signs, (for thou hast thy experience, obedience and instructions for a guide), I wish that with the wings of the dove thou direct thy flight to the high refuge of the Almighty (Ps. 54, 7), calling upon Him for aid and proffering the merits of my most holy Son. To me also shouldst thou fly for protection as I am thy Mother and Teacher, and to thy devoted angels, and to all the rest of thy advocates in the Lord. Quickly close up thy senses and consider thyself as dead to them, or as a soul already belonging to the other life, whither the jurisdiction and the exacting tyranny of the serpent does not reach. Occupy thyself so much the more earnestly in the exercise of the virtue contrary to the vice to which he tempts thee, and especially in acts of faith, hope and love, which dispel cowardice and doubt, and weaken the influence of discouragement and fear in the human heart.

The arguments for overcoming Lucifer thou must seek in God alone; and do not disclose them to your enemy, lest he meet thee with fallacies and confusing pretense. Besides knowing it to be dangerous, esteem it as unworthy of thee to argue with him openly, or to pay particular attention to him, who is not only the enemy of thy Beloved but also of thee. Show thyself superior to him and highmindedly apply thyself to the practice of all virtues. Be content with this treasure and withdraw thyself; for the most skillful battle of the sons of God consists in flying farthest from evil. The devil is proud and is deeply hurt by contempt; in the presumption of his arrogance and vanity he desires above all the attention of men. On this account he is so persistent in pursuing us step by step; for in his deceitfulness he cannot rely upon the force of truth, but on his persistent counterfeiting of the good and the true. As long as this slave of

wickedness is not despised, he never believes himself discovered and he continues, like an importunate fly, to buzz about the spot tainted by the greatest corruption.

Not less warily must thou conduct thyself, when thy enemy makes use of other creatures for thy destruction. This he does in two ways: either leading them on to immoderate love, or to undue dislike or hatred. As soon as thou noticest a disorderly affection in those with whom thou conversest, observe the same precaution as in flying from the demon; yet with this difference, that while thou hatest him as thy enemy, thou consider the others as God's creatures to whom thou must not deny the consideration due to them on account of his Majesty. But in as far as withdrawing from them is concerned, act as if they were thy enemies; for in regard to the service, which the Lord requires of thee and in regard to thy present condition, it is the devil who operates in these persons toward separating thee from thy God and from thy duty. If on the other hand they hate and persecute thee, answer them with meekness and love, praying for them with intimate affection of thy heart (Matth. 5, 44). If it should be necessary, soothe the wrath of thy persecutors with sweet words, and undeceive those who are led astray by false reports. Do this not in order to excuse thyself, but in order to pacify thy brothers and for their inward and outward peace; thus thou wilt at one and the same time conquer thyself and those who hate thee. In order to be well practiced in this way of acting it is necessary to cut off the very roots of the capital sins, to tear them out, and to die to the movements of the appetites. For in these appetites the seven capital vices to which the devil leads men, are rooted, and in these disorderly and undisciplined passions he sows the germs of the seven sins.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RESISTANCE TO TEMPTATIONS.

My daughter, the silence which the soul should maintain when the invisible enemies advance with their specious reasonings, should not prevent it from imposing silence upon them in the name of the Most High, and from commanding them to leave its presence in confusion. Therefore I desire this to be thy prudent behavior when they assault thee; for there is no other defense so powerful against the dragon than to be conscious of the power which we possess as children of God, and to use the advantage which this confidence gives us by exercising our dominion and superiority over the infernal spirits (Matth. 6, 9). For the whole aim of Lucifer, after he had fallen from heaven, consists in enticing souls from their Creator and in sowing the seed of discord, by which he hopes to separate from the heavenly Father his adopted children, and the spouses of Christ from their Bridegroom. Whenever he perceives that a soul is united with his Creator and in living communion with its head Christ, he tries to surpass himself in his furious attempts at persecuting it; his envy arouses the utmost exertion of his deceitfulness and malice for its destruction. But as soon as he sees that he cannot succeed in his attempts, because the soul takes refuge in the unfailing and unassailable protection of the Most High, he weakens in his attempts and begins to writhe in exquisite torments. If the soul, thus strengthened with the authority of God's truth, despises and casts him out, there

is no creeping worm or ant so weak as that giant of iniquitous pride.

By this most true doctrine thou must comfort and strengthen thyself, when, according to the decree of the Almighty, thou meetest tribulations and art surrounded by the sorrows of death in temptations such as I have suffered. For they afford thy Spouse the best occasion of verifying thy fidelity by experience. Therefore love must not be satisfied merely with mere protestations of affection without looking for more valuable fruit; for the desire which costs nothing is not a sufficient proof of love in a soul, nor of its proper esteem of the good which it pretends to hold dear and love. If thou wishest to give a satisfactory proof of thy love to thy Spouse, show thyself invincible in thy trust in Him also then when thou findest thyself most afflicted and forsaken by human aid; confide in the Lord thy God, and hope in Him, if necessary, against hope (Rom. 4, 18). For He does not slumber, nor does He sleep, who calls Himself the protection of Israel (Ps. 120, 4). In due time He will command the waves and the wind, and restore tranquillity (Matth. 8, 26).

Thou must be much more wary, my daughter, in the beginning of the temptations; for there is then greater danger lest the soul, yielding to the concupiscent or the irascible passions, by which the light of reason is obscured and darkened, allow itself to be thrown into confusion. As soon as the demon notices such a state of mind he will raise a whirlwind of dust in the faculties. His fierceness is so immeasurable and implacable that it will then increase in fury. He will add flame to flame, thinking that the soul has no one to defend and rescue it from his hands (Ps. 120, 11). With the force of his temptations increases also the danger of failing in the

necessary resistance, since the soul has commenced to yield in the very beginning. All this I make known to thee, in order that thou mayest fear the danger of being remiss in guarding against the first approaches of the demon. Do not incur it in what is so important. Thou shouldst continue in the even tenor of thy duties in every temptation; keeping up the sweet and devout union with the Lord and preserving thy prudent and loving intercourse with thy neighbors, thou shouldst forestall by prayer and by restraint of thy feelings the disorder which the enemy seeks to bring about in thy soul.

BOOK FOUR

Lessons given by the Queen of Heaven in connection with the History of her Life up to her Return from Egypt.

CHAPTER I.

THE FATHERLY SOLICITUDE OF GOD FOR SOULS.

My dearest daughter, most exalted are the thoughts and intentions of the Lord; his Providence with souls is sweet and powerful and He is admirable in the government of them all, especially of his friends and chosen ones. If mortals would strive to know the loving care for their direction and advancement, as shown by this Father of mercies (Matth. 6, 5), they would be relieved and would not be involved in such irksome, useless and dangerous anxieties, living in perpetual toils and vain trust in the help of creatures. For they would resign themselves without hesitation to the infinite wisdom and love, which, with paternal sweetness and gentleness would watch over all their thoughts, words and actions and all things necessary for them. I do not wish thee to be ignorant of this truth, but to understand how the Lord from all eternity bears in his mind all the predestined of the different times and ages; and that by the invincible force of his infinite wisdom and goodness He continually disposes and prepares all the blessings useful to them, so that the end desired for them may be attained.

Hence it is very important for the rational crea-

ture to allow itself to be led by the hand of the Lord and leave all to the divine disposition; for mortal men are ignorant of their ways and of the goal to which they lead. In their ignorance they should not presume to chose, lest they make themselves guilty of great temerity and incur the danger of damnation. But if they resign themselves with all their heart to the divine Providence of God, acknowledging him as their Father and themselves as his children and creatures, his Majesty will constitute Himself as their Protector, Helper and Director; and He will assume these offices with such love that He wishes to call heaven and earth to witness how much He considers it his affair to govern his own and direct those who trust and resign themselves into his hands. If God were capable of grief, or of jealousy like men, it would be aroused in Him at seeing creatures claiming a part in the providing for the welfare of souls and that souls should seek to supply their necessities from other quarters independently of Him (Wis. 12, 13). Mortals would not be so ignorant of this truth if they would study what happens between a father and his children, a husband and his wife, one friend and another, a prince and his well-loved and honored subject. All that these do is nothing in comparison with the love which God had for his children, and that which He can do and will do for them.

Yet although men in general believe this truth, no one can fully estimate the love of God and its effects on those souls who resign themselves entirely to his will. Nor canst thou, my daughter, manifest what thou knowest, nor shouldst thou; but thou must not lose sight of it in the Lord. His Majesty says, that not a hair of his elect shall perish, because He keeps account of them (Luke 21, 18). He directs their footsteps toward

eternal life and keeps them from death. He observes their labors, lovingly corrects their defects, favors their desires, forestalls their anxieties, defends them in anger, rejoices them in peace, strengthens them in battle, assists them in tribulation. His wisdom is at their service against deceit, his goodness for their sanctification. As He is infinite, whom none can hinder or resist, He executes what He wishes, and He wishes to be entirely at the service of the just, who are in his grace and trust themselves wholly to Him. Who could ever measure the number and greatness of the blessings which He would shower upon a heart prepared to receive them!

If thou, my dearest, wishest to attain to gain this good fortune, imitate me with true solicitude and apply thyself from now on to establish in thee a true resignation in the divine Providence. If He sends thee tribulations, sorrows and labors, accept and embrace them with tranquillity of soul, with patience, lively faith and hope in the goodness of the Most High, who always provides that which is the most secure and profitable for thy salvation. Chose nothing for thyself, since God knows thy ways; trust thyself to the heavenly Father and Spouse, who will shield and assist thee with most faithful love. Study also My works, since they are known to thee; and remember that, excepting the labors of my most holy Son, the greatest suffering of my life was to see the tribulations of my spouse saint Joseph, and his grief in the matter which thou hast described.

CHAPTER II.

DISCREET RESERVE IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.

My daughter, the example of my silence, which thou hast been writing about, should teach thee to use it as a guide in thy treatment of the favors and sacraments of the Lord, namely that thou keep them concealed within thy heart. Although it might at times seem useful to reveal them for the consolation of some soul, thou must not act upon this opinion without having first consulted God in prayer, and then thy superiors. For these spiritual matters must not be made dependent upon human feeling, which are so much subject to the passions and inclinations of nature. There is always great danger of considering that to be an advantage which is harmful, and a service to God, what is injurious. It is not given to eyes of the flesh and blood (I Cor. 2, 14) to discern the interior movements, so as to decide which of them are divine and caused by grace, or which are human, engendered by the disorderly affections. Although there is great difference between these two kinds of affections and their causes, nevertheless, if the creature is not highly enlightened and dead to its passions, it cannot recognize this difference, nor separate the precious from the vile (Jer. 15, 19). This danger is greater when some temporal or human motive is mixed up with or underlies our actions; for then our natural self-love is wont to creep in and take away discretion and supervision of heavenly and spiritual things, leading on to many sudden and dangerous falls.

Let it therefore be to thee as a rule always to be followed that thou reveal nothing to any one except to thy spiritual guide, unless I command otherwise. Since I have constituted myself thy Teacher, I will not fail to give thee advice and direction in this and in all other things, lest thou stray from the path appointed to thee by the will of my most holy Son. Yet I admonish thee to appreciate highly all the favors and revelations of the Most High. Preserve them with a magnanimous heart; esteem them, give thanks for them, and put them to practice in preference to anything else, especially in preference to anything originating from thy own inclinations. The reverential fear of God bound me to silence, having (as was proper) such a high regard for the Treasure deposited in me. Notwithstanding the natural feeling of love and obligation toward my master and spouse saint Joseph, and in disregard of the sorrow and compassion for his afflictions, of which I so desired to free him, I hid the secret of my state in silence, preferring the pleasure of the Lord to all these, and leaving to Him the defense of my cause. Learn also from this never to defend thyself against accusations, no matter how innocent thou mayest be. Oblige the Lord to do it by confiding in his love. Charge thy reputation to his account; and in the meanwhile overcome by patience and humility, by sweet and kind words, those who have offended thee. Above all things I admonish thee never to judge evil of any one, even if thou seest with thy own eyes the outward warrants of thy judgment; for perfect and sincere charity will teach thee to find a prudent evasion and excuse for all faults of thy neighbor. God has placed my spouse, saint Joseph, as a shining example for such a course of action, since no one had more evident proofs of evil, and no one was more discreet in deferring his

judgment. For in the law of discreet and holy charity it must be held as prudence, not temerity, to suspect higher causes, as yet unseen, rather than to judge and condemn our neighbors for faults in which his guilt is not clearly evident. I do not give thee special instructions for those that are in the state of matrimony, since they can derive them manifestly from the whole course of my life. But from the above instruction all can profit, although just now I have in view thy own advancement, because I desire it with especial love. Hear me, daughter, and fulfill my counsels and follow these my words of eternal life.

CHAPTER III.

TRANQUILLITY IN AFFLICTION.

My daughter, in what thou hast understood of this chapter, thou hast a sweet motive for praising the wonderful ways of God's wisdom in afflicting and again consoling his servants and chosen ones; from both the one and the other, He most wisely and kindly draws for them increase of merit and glory. Besides this doctrine, I wish that thou receive another one, most important for thy direction, and for the narrow pathway, which the Most High has assigned to thee. It is this, that thou strive with all thy might to preserve thyself in tranquillity and interior peace, without allowing thyself to be deprived of it by any troublesome event of this life whatever, and by always keeping in mind the example and instruction contained in this part of the life of my spouse saint Joseph. The Most High does not wish to see the creatures disturbed by afflictions, but that they gain merit; not that they lose courage, but that they test their own power when aided by grace. Although the more violent temptations are wont to close the haven of exalted peace and knowledge of God, and although they ground the creature more firmly in the knowledge of its own lowliness; yet if the soul loses its interior tranquillity and equilibrium, it will make itself unfit for the visit of the Lord, for hearing his voice, and for being raised up to his embraces. The Majesty of God does not come in a stormcloud (III. Reg. 19, 12), nor will the rays

of this supreme Sun of justice shine, when calm is not reigning in the soul.

If then the want of this tranquillity so hinders the pure intercourse of the Most High, it is clear that sins are a still greater hindrance to this great blessing. I desire that thou be very attentive to this doctrine and that thou do not presume to allow any disregard of it in any operation of thy faculties. Since thou hast so often offended the Lord, call upon his mercy, weep and wash thyself from thy sins with copious tears; remember that, under pain of being condemned as unfaithful, thou art obliged to watch over thy soul and preserve it for an eternal resting-place of the Almighty, pure, clean and undisturbed; so that thy God may possess it and find in it a worthy habitation (I Cor. 2, 16). The harmony of thy faculties and feelings is to be like that of the music of soft and delicate instruments; in which the more delicate the harmony, so much the greater is the danger of discord and so much the greater must be the care to preserve the instruments from all gross contact. For even the atmosphere infected by earthly tendencies is sufficient to disturb and spoil the powers of the soul thus consecrated to God. Labor therefore to live a careful life and to keep full command over thy faculties and operations. If at any time thou art disturbed or disconcerted in maintaining this order, strive to attend the divine light, making use of it without fear or hesitation and working with it whatever is most perfect and pure. In this I point out to thee the example of my spouse saint Joseph, who believed the angel without a moment's hesitation and immediately with prompt obedience executed his commands; and thereby he merited to be raised to great reward and dignity. If he humiliated himself so deeply

after having had such great, though only apparent reasons for anxiety and without even having sinned in what he did, how must thou, a mere worm of the earth, acknowledge thy littleness and humble thyself to the dust, weeping over thy negligences and sins, in order that the Most High may look upon thee as a Father and as a Spouse.

CHAPTER IV.

WANT OF HUMILITY AND LOVE IN DEALING WITH FELLOWMEN.

My daughter, my object in revealing to thee in this history so many sacraments and secrets, both those which thou hast written and many others, which thou art unable to manifest, is, that thou use them as a mirror of my life and as an inviolable rule of action for thy own. All of them should be engraven in the tablets of thy heart and I recall to thy mind the teachings of eternal life, thereby complying with my duty as thy Teacher. Be ready to obey and fulfill all commands as a willing and careful pupil; let the humble care and watchfulness of my spouse saint Joseph, his submission to divine direction and his esteem for heavenly enlightenment, serve thee as an example. For only because his heart had been well disposed and prepared for the execution of the divine will, was he entirely changed and remodeled by the plenitude of grace for the ministry assigned to him by the Most High. Let therefore the consciousness of thy faults serve thee as a motive to submit in all humility to the work of God, not as a pretext to withdraw from the performance of that which the Lord desires of thee.

However, I wish on this occasion to reveal to thee the just reproach and indignation of the Most High against mortals; so that, comparing the conduct of other men with the humility and meekness, which I exercised toward my spouse saint Joseph, thou mayest understand it better in divine enlightenment. The cause of this

reproach, which the Lord and I have to make against men, is the inhuman perversity of men in persisting to treat each other with so much want of humility and love. In this they commit three faults, which displease the Most High very much and which cause the Almighty and me to withhold many mercies. The first is, that men, knowing that they are all children of the same Father in heaven (Is. 64, 8), works of his hands, formed of the same nature, graciously nourished and kept alive by his Providence, reared at the same table of divine mysteries and Sacraments, especially of his own body and blood, nevertheless forget and despise all these advantages, concentrating all their interest upon earthly and trivial affairs, exciting themselves without reason, swelling with indignation, creating discords, quarrels, indulging in detractions and harsh words, sometimes rising up to most wicked and inhuman vengeance or mortal hate of one another. The second is, that, when through human frailty and want of mortification, incited by the temptation of the devil, they happen to fall into one of these faults, they do not at once seek to rid themselves of it nor strive to be again reconciled, as should be done by brothers in the presence of a just judge. Thus they deny Him as their merciful Father and force Him to become the severe and rigid Judge of their sins; for no faults excite Him sooner to exercise his severity than the sins of revenge and hate. The third offense, which causes his great indignation, is, that sometimes, when a brother comes in order to be reconciled, he that deems himself offended will not receive him and asks a greater satisfaction than that which he knows would be accepted by the Lord, and which he himself offers as satisfaction to God's Majesty. For all of them wish that God, who is most grievously offended, should receive and pardon

them, whenever they approach Him with humility and contrition; while those that are but dust and ashes, ask to be revenged upon their brothers and will not content themselves with the satisfaction, which the Most High himself readily accepts for their own sins.

Of all the sins, which the sons of the Church commit, none is more horrible than these in the eyes of the Most High. This thou wilt readily understand by the divine light and in the vigor of God's law, which commands men to pardon their brethren, although they may have offended seventy times seven. And if a brother offend many times every day, as soon as he says that he is sorry for it, the Lord commands us to forgive the offending brother as many times without counting the number. And those that are not willing to forgive, He threatens with severest punishment on account of the scandal, which they cause. This can be gathered from the threatening words of God himself: Woe to him from whom scandal comes and through whom scandal is caused! It were better for him, if he fell into the depths of the sea with a heavy millstone around his neck. This was said in order to indicate the danger of this sin and the difficulty of obtaining deliverance therefrom, which must be compared to that of a man dropping into the sea with a grinding-stone around his neck. It also points out that the punishment is the abyss of eternal pains (Matth. 8, 9). Therefore the command of my most holy Son is good advice to the faithful, that they rather permit their eyes to be torn out and their hands chopped off, than allow themselves to fall into this crime of scandalizing the little ones.

O my dearest daughter! How thou must bewail the wickedness and evils of this sin with tears of blood! That is the sin, which grieves the Holy Ghost (Eph. 4,

30), affords proud triumphs to the demons, makes monsters of rational creatures, and wipes out in them the image of the eternal Father! What thing more unbecoming, or hateful and monstrous, than to see creatures of the earth, the food of worms and corruption, rise up against one another in pride and arrogance? Thou wilt not find words strong enough to describe this wickedness, in order to persuade mortals to fear it and guard against the wrath of the Lord (Matt. 3, 7). But do thou, dearest, preserve thy heart from this contagion, stamp and engrave in it the most useful doctrine for thy guidance. Never think for a moment, that in offending thy neighbor or scandalizing him in this way, the guilt can be small, for all these sins are weighty in the sight of God. Place a damper on all thy faculties and feelings in order to observe most strictly the rules of charity toward all creatures of the Most High. To me also afford this pleasure, since I wish thee to be most perfect in this virtue. I impose upon thee as my most vigorous precept, that thou give offense neither in thought, word or deed to any of thy neighbors; and that thou prevent any of thy subjects, and, as far as thou canst, any other person in thy presence from injuring their neighbor. Meditate well on this, as I ask it of thee, my dearest; for it is a doctrine most divine and least understood by mortals. Serve thyself with the only remedy against these passions: namely, with the compelling example of my humility and meekness, the effect of the sincere love not only toward my spouse, but toward all the children of the heavenly Father; for I esteemed them and looked upon them as redeemed and bought for a great price (I Pet. 1, 18). With true fidelity and ingenious charity watch over thy religious. The divine Majesty is offended grievously by any one who does not

fulfill this command expressly inculcated and called a new one by my Son (John 15, 12); but He is roused to incomparably greater indignation against religious persons, who offend against it. Among these there are many, who should distinguish themselves as perfect children of the Father and Teacher of this virtue; nevertheless they cast it aside and thereby become more odious and detestable in his sight than worldly persons.

CHAPTER V.

ADVANCE IN HUMILITY.

My daughter, in the school of humility, which my whole life affords thee, I wish that thou be studious and diligent; and this should be thy first and principal care, if thou wishest to enjoy the sweet embraces of the Lord, assure thyself of his favor and possess the treasures of light, which are hidden to the proud (Matth. 11, 25). For without the trusty foundation of humility such treasures cannot be confided to any man. Let all thy ambition be to humble thyself in thy own estimation and thought, so that in thy exterior actions thou mayest truly exhibit this humility of thy interior. It must be a subject of confusion and a spur of humility for thee and for all the souls to have the Lord as their Father and Spouse, to see, that the presumption and pride of worldly wisdom is more powerful in its devotees, than humility and true self-knowledge is in the children of light. Consider the watchfulness, the untiring study and care of ambitious and aspiring men. Look upon their struggle to be esteemed in the world, their strivings never at rest, though so vain and worthless; how they conduct themselves outwardly according to the false notions which they have of themselves; how they pretend to be what they are not, and how they exert themselves to obtain through these false pretenses the treasures, which, though only earthly, they do not deserve. Hence it should be a cause of confusion and shame to the good, that deceit should urge on the sons of perdition with greater force than truth urges the elect; that the number of those, who in the world are anxious to strive in the service of their God and Creator, should be so small in comparison with

the number of those who serve vanity; that there should be so few of the elect, though all are called (Matth. 20 16).

Seek therefore, my daughter, to make progress in this science of humility and to gain for thyself the palm of victory in this virtue in the midst of the children of darkness; in opposition to their pride, study what I did in order to overcome darkness in this world by the pursuit of humility. In this the Lord and I desire thee to be very wise and proficient. Never miss an occasion of exercising humility and allow no one to deprive thee of such works; and if occasions of humility fail thee and are scarce, seek after them and ask God to send them to you; for it pleases his Majesty to see such kind of anxiety and ambition in what He desires so much. For the sake of this divine complacency alone, thou, as a daughter of his house, as his domestic and as his spouse, shouldst be solicitous and anxious for acts of humility; for in this, human ambition itself will teach thee not to be negligent. Observe how a woman in her house and family conducts herself in order to benefit and advance her family, and how she loses no chance of advancing it; nothing seems too much for her, and if anything, no matter how small it is, goes to loss (Lucas. 15, 8) she becomes much excited. All this is the effect of worldly covetousness, and there is certainly no reason, that the wisdom of heaven be less fruitful or less careful in the gifts received. Therefore I desire thee to allow no carelessness or forgetfulness concerning what so much concerns thee, and to lose no occasion of practicing humility and laboring for the glory of the Lord; but do thou seek and strive after his gifts and draw merits from them as a faithful daughter and spouse. Then wilt thou find grace in the eyes of the Lord and in mine, according to thy desire.

CHAPTER VI.

INORDINATE DESIRE FOR POSSESSIONS.

Much-beloved daughter, I wish that the science of the Lord be many times renewed in thee, and that thou acquire the knowledge of the voice (Wis. 1, 7), so that thou mayst know, (and let also mortals know), the dangerous deceit and perverse estimation in which they, as lovers of falsehood, hold the temporal and visible goods (Ps. 4, 4). How many men are not fascinated by their unbounded greed? All of them ordinarily stake their hopes on gold and material riches; and in order to increase them, they exert all the forces of their natural being. Thus they spend all the time of their life, which was given them in order to gain eternal rest and happiness, in these vanities. They lose themselves in these dark labyrinths and mazes, as if they knew nothing of God and of his Providence; for they do not think of asking Him for that which they desire, and do not moderate their desires in such a way as will dispose them to ask and hope for what they desire at his hands. Thus they lose all, because they confide in the lying and deceitful prospects of their own efforts. This blind greed is the root of all evils (I Tim. 6, 20); for the Lord, incensed at such great perversity, permits the mortals to be entangled in the vile slavery of avarice, in which their understanding is darkened and their will hardened. Soon the Most High, for greater punishment, withdraws his kindly care as from creatures so detestable and denies them his paternal protection, thus letting them fall into

what is the deepest misfortune that can befall man in this life.

Although it is true that nothing can hide itself from the eyes of the Lord (Ps. 137, 6), yet when the transgressors and enemies of his law offend Him, they forfeit the kind attention and care of his Providence and are left to their own desires (Ps. 80, 13). They cease to experience the paternal foresight shown toward those who trust in the Lord. Those that confide in their own efforts and in the gold, which they can touch and feel, will reap the fruit of their hopes. But just as far as the divine Essence and Power is distant from the lowliness and limitation of mortals, so far also the results of human covetousness are distant from the help and protection of eternal Providence shown to the humble who trust in it (Ps. 17, 31). Upon these his Majesty looks with kindest love, delights in them, nourishes them at his breast, and attends to their wishes and wants. I and my holy spouse Joseph were poor, and at times we suffered great wants; but none of them were powerful enough to engender within our hearts the contagion of avarice. We concerned ourselves entirely with the glory of the Most High, relying wholly on his most faithful and tender care. This was what pleased Him so much, as thou hast understood and written; since He supplied our wants in various manners, even commanding the angels to help us and prepare for us our nourishment.

I do not wish to say that the mortals should yield to laziness and negligence; on the contrary it is just that all should labor (Ps. 47, 7), and doing nothing is also a great and very reprehensible fault. Neither leisure nor solicitude must be disorderly; nor should the creature trust in his own strength; nor should he smother the divine love in anxiety; nor seek more than is necessary

for a temperate life. Neither should he fear that the divine Providence will fail to supply what is necessary, nor should he be troubled or lose hope when the Creator seems to delay his assistance. In the same way he that is in abundance should not (Eccli. 31, 8) lay aside all exertion and forget that he is a man subject to labor and travail. Thus riches as well as poverty must be attributed to God and made use of in a holy and legitimate way for the glory of the Creator and Ruler of all things. If men would observe this rule of action nobody would be without the assistance of the Lord, who is a true Father, and neither would the poor be led into sin by poverty, nor the rich by prosperity. Of thee, my daughter, I require the practice of these rules, and through thee I wish to inculcate them on other mortals. Thou must especially impress this doctrine upon all thy subjects, telling them not to be troubled or faint-hearted because of the wants they suffer, nor inordinately solicitous about their eating or clothing (Matth. 6, 25), but that they confide in the Most High and in his Providence. For if they correspond to his love, I assure them that they shall never suffer from the want of what is necessary. Exhort them also to let their words and conversations continually turn about holy and divine things, engaging in the praise and exaltation of the Lord according to the teachings of the Bible and holy writings. Let their conversations be in heaven (Philip 3, 20) with the Most High, and with me, who am their Mother and Superior, and let it be with the angels, imitating them in holy love.

CHAPTER VII.

REVERENCE FOR SACRED OBJECTS.

The lesson of this chapter, my daughter, should be, that thou bear in mind with what reverence thou must handle all the things consecrated and devoted to the divine service; and at the same time estimate how reprehensible is the irreverence with which the ministers of the Lord offend in their disregard for the sacred objects. They should not forget or slight the indignation of his Majesty against them for the gross discourtesy and ingratitude, which they ordinarily show by handling the sacred ornaments and objects of worship without attention and respect. And much greater is the anger of the Lord against those who possess the incomes or stipends of his most sacred blood, if they waste and squander them in vile vanities and indecent profanities. They seek for their sustenance and convenience what is most costly and valuable, while for the honor and worship of the Lord they are satisfied with what is most cheap, common and ordinary. When this happens, especially in regard to the linens, which touch the body and blood of my most holy Son, such as corporals and purificators, I wish thee to understand that the holy angels, that assist at the most exalted and sublime sacrifice, are as it were struck with horror and cover their eyes at the sight, full of astonishment that the Most High bears with them and suffers such boldness and presumption. Although not all offend in this, yet there are many; and few distinguish themselves in outward respect and care at the divine cult, or

treat the sacred objects with due reverence; they are the smaller number and even they do not all have the pure intention, not observing this due respect out of reverence, but out of vanity and for other human ends. Thus they who adore and worship their Creator in the spirit of truth and with a pure and upright intention have become very scarce.

Consider, my dearest, what should be our sentiments when, on the one hand, we reflect on the incomprehensible being of God, who in his goodness has created us for his honor and worship, establishing this as the very law of our nature and of all the created universe, and when, on the other hand, we see with what ingratitude men correspond to the gifts of the most liberal Creator by withholding from his service the very things intended for it, reserving for their own vanities the most costly and valuable and applying for their Creator only the most valueless and despicable of this world. This fault is little thought of and recognized, and therefore I wish not only that thou deplore it with true sorrow, but also that thou make reparation for it as far as possible during the time in which thou art superioress. Give to the Lord of the best, and instruct thy religious that they attend with a sincere and devout heart to the keeping in order and the cleaning of the sacred articles; and this not only for their own convent, but also by seeking to furnish other poor churches with the corporals and vestments of which they stand in need. Let them be convinced that the Lord will repay their holy zeal for his worship, and that He will relieve their poverty and the necessities of their convent like a Father, and that thereby it will never become poorer. This is the most appropriate occupation and legitimate occupation of the spouses of Christ, and in this they ought to consume their time

which may remain after fulfilling the obligations of the choir and other duties of obedience. If all the religious would busy themselves purposely in these honorable, praiseworthy and agreeable occupations they would never suffer any want and they would maintain an angelic existence in this life. Because they do not attend to this service of the Lord, many of them, forsaken by the hand of the God, turn toward the dangerous levities and distractions, which on account of their vileness, I do not wish thee to describe or consider except to deplore them from thy heart and to avert such displeasure and offense against God.

But because I have especial reason to look with favor upon the inmates of thy convent, I wish that, in my name and by my authority, thou admonish and lovingly urge them always to live retired and dead to the world, with unbroken forgetfulness of all that passes within it; that among themselves their conversation be of heaven, and that above all they preserve intact the mutual peace and love, to which I have exhorted thee so often (Philip 3, 20). If they obey me in this I offer them my protection, and I will constitute myself their Mother, their help and defense in the same way as I am thine, and I will also promise them my continual and efficacious intercession with my most holy Son, if they do not displease me. For this purpose thou shouldst exhort them to continual love and devotion toward me, engrafting it in their hearts; in being thus faithful they will attain all that thou wishest for them, and much more, for I will obtain it for them. In order that they may occupy themselves with joy and alacrity in preparing things for the divine worship, and gladly undertake all that pertains to it, remind them of all that I did in the service of my most holy Son and of the temple. I desire thee to understand that the

holy angels were full of admiration at the zeal, careful attention and neatness with which I took charge of all that belonged to the service of my Son and Lord. This loving and reverent anxiety caused me to prepare all that was necessary for his rearing up beforehand, so that I was never in want of anything necessary for clothing Him and administering to his comfort (as some have thought); for my prudence and love would not permit any negligence or inadvertence in this regard.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOD'S GENEROSITY.

My daughter, in all thy discourse on my life, and in each of the chapters and mysteries so far rehearsed, thou wilt find the admirable providence of the Most High and his fatherly love toward me, his humble servant. Although human capacity cannot fully penetrate and estimate the admirable works of such high wisdom, yet it must venerate it with all its powers, and must seek to participate in the favors which the Lord showed me, by striving to imitate me. For mortals must not think that only for my sake and in me God wished to show Himself as holy, powerful and infinitely good. It is certain that if any or all of the souls would entrust themselves to the direction and government of this Lord they would soon experience that same fidelity, punctuality and most sweet efficacy with which his Majesty arranged all things that touched upon his honor and service in my life. They would likewise taste those delightful and divine emotions which I felt in relying upon his most holy will; nor would they fail to receive the abundance of his gifts, which are enclosed as in an infinite ocean within his Divinity. And just as the waters of the ocean rush forth wherever they find a suitable opening, so the graces and blessings of the Lord overflow upon rational creatures, when they are well-disposed and do not hinder their course. This truth is hidden to mortals because they do not stop to ponder and consider the works of the Almighty.

I desire thee to study this truth, to write it within

thy heart, and to learn from my own actions the secret workings of thy own interior so that thou understand what goes on within thee; also that thou practice ready obedience and subjection to others, always preferring the good counsels of others to thy own insight and judgment. Thou must carry this to such a point that, in order to obey thy superiors and thy spiritual directors, thou take no notice of what thou foreseest will happen contrary to their expectations; just as I, when I knew that what my holy spouse Joseph expected would not happen on our journey to Bethlehem. And even when some equal or inferior command thee such things, be silent and hide thy better foreknowledge; perform all that is no sin or imperfection. Listen to all with attention and silence so that thou mayest learn; in speaking be very slow and reserved, for in this consist prudent and careful intercourse. Always bear in mind that thou ask the blessing of the Lord for all that thou wishest to undertake, in order that thou mayest not wander from what is pleasing to Him. Whenever thou hast an opportunity, ask also the permission and blessing of thy spiritual father and director, so that thou mayest not fall short of the greatest merits and perfections in thy works, and in order that thou mayest also give me the pleasure, which I desire of thee.

CHAPTER IX.

THE IMITATION OF MARY.

My dearest daughter, if thou art of a meek and docile heart, these mysteries which thou hast written about and hast understood, will stir within thee sweet sentiments of love and affection toward the Author of such great wonders. I wish that, bearing them in mind, thou from this day on embrace with new and great esteem the contempt and neglect of the world. And tell me, dearest, if, in exchange for this forgetfulness and scorn of the world, God look upon thee with eyes of sweetest love, why shouldst thou not buy so cheaply what is worth an infinite price? What can the world give thee, even when it esteems thee and exalts thee most? And what dost thou lose, if thou despise it? Is its favor not all vanity and deceit (Ps. 4, 3)? Is it not all a fleeting and momentary shadow, which eludes the grasp of those that haste after it? Hence, if thou hadst all worldly advantage in thy possession, what great feat would it be to despise it as of no value? Consider how little thou dost in rejecting all of it for the love of God, for mine and that of the holy angels. And if the world does not neglect thee as much as thou shouldst desire, do thou on thy own behalf despise it, in order to remain free and unhampered to enjoy to the full extent the highest Good with the plenitude of his most delightful love and intercourse.

My most holy Son is such a faithful Lover of souls that He hast set me as the teacher and living example of the love of humility and true contempt of

worldly vanity and pride. He ordained also for his own glory as well as for my sake that I, his Servant and Mother, should be left without shelter and be turned away by mortals, in order that afterwards his beloved souls might be so much the more readily induced to offer Him a welcome, thus obliging Him, by an artifice of love, to come and remain with them. He also sought destitution and poverty, not because He had any need of them for bringing the practice of virtues to the highest perfection, but in order to teach mortals the shortest and surest way for reaching the heights of divine love and union with God.

Thou knowest well, my dearest, that thou hast been incessantly instructed and exhorted by divine enlightenment to forget the terrestrial and visible and to gird thyself with fortitude (Prov. 31, 17), to raise thyself to the imitation of me, copying in thyself, according to thy capacity, the works and virtues manifested to thee in my life. This is the very first purpose of the knowledge which thou receivest in writing this history; for thou hast in me a perfect model, and by it thou canst arrange the converse and conduct of thy life in the same manner as I arranged mine in imitation of my sweetest Son. The dread with which this command to imitate me has inspired thee as a being above thy strength, thou must moderate and thou must encourage thyself by the words of my most holy Son in the Gospel of saint Matthew: "Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect" (Matth. 5, 8). This command of the Most High imposed upon his holy Church is not impossible of fulfillment, and, if his faithful children on their part dispose themselves properly, He will deny to none of them the grace of attaining this resemblance to the heavenly Father. All this my most holy Son has merited for them.

But the degrading forgetfulness and neglect of men hinder them from maturing within themselves the fruits of his Redemption.

Of thee particularly I expect this perfection, and I invite thee to it by the sweet law of love which accompanies my instruction. Ponder and scrutinize, by the divine light, the obligation under which I place thee, and labor to correspond with it like a faithful and anxious child. Let no difficulty or hardship disturb thee, nor deter thee from any virtuous exercise, no matter how hard it may be. Nor be content with striving after the love of God and salvation of thyself alone; if thou wouldst be perfect in imitating me and fulfilling all that the Gospel teaches, thou must work for the salvation of other souls and the exaltation of the holy name of my Son, making thyself an instrument in his powerful hands for the accomplishment of mighty works to advance his pleasure and glory.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONTEMPLATION OF CHRIST INCARNATE.

My daughter, if men would keep their heart disengaged and if they would rightly and worthily consider this great sacrament of the kindness of the Most High towards men, it would be a powerful means of conducting them in the pathway of life and subjecting them to the love of their Creator and Redeemer. For as men are capable of reasoning, if they would only make use of their freedom to treat this sacrament with the reverence due to its greatness, who would be so hardened as not to be moved to tenderness at the sight of their God become man, humiliated in poverty, despised, unknown, entering the world in a cave, lying in a manger surrounded by brute animals, protected only by a poverty-stricken Mother, and cast off by the foolish arrogance of the world? Who will dare to love the vanity and pride, which was openly abhorred and condemned by the Creator of heaven and earth in his conduct? No one can despise the humility, poverty and indigence, which the Lord loved and chose for Himself as the very means of teaching the way of eternal life. Few there are, who stop to consider this truth and example: and on account of this vile ingratitude only the few will reap the fruit of these great sacraments.

But if the condescension of my most holy Son was so great as to bestow so liberally upon thee his light and knowledge concerning these vast blessings, ponder well how much thou art bound to co-operate with this

light. In order that thou mayest correspond to this obligation, I remind and exhort thee to forget all that is of earth and lose it out of thy sight; that thou seek nothing, or engage thyself with nothing except what can help thee to withdraw and detach thee from the world and its inhabitants; so that, with a heart freed from all terrestrial affection, thou dispose thyself to celebrate in it the mysteries of the poverty, humility and divine love of the incarnate God. Learn from my example the reverence, fear and respect, with which thou must treat Him, remembering how I acted, when I held Him in my arms; follow my example, whenever thou receivest Him in thy heart in the venerable sacrament of the holy Eucharist, wherein is contained the same God-Man, who was born of my womb. In this holy Sacrament thou receivest Him and possessest Him just as really, and He remains in thee just as actually, as I possessed Him and conversed with Him, although in another manner.

I desire that thou go even to extremes in this holy reverence and fear; and I wish that thou take notice and be convinced, that in entering into thy heart in the holy Sacrament, thy God exhorts thee in the same words, which thou hast recorded as spoken to me: become like unto Me. His coming down from heaven onto the earth, his being born in humility and poverty, his living and dying in it, giving such rare example of the contempt of the world and its deceits; the knowledge, which thou hast received concerning his conduct and which thou hast penetrated so deeply by divine intelligence: all these things should be for thee like living voices, which thou must heed and inscribe into the interior of thy heart. These privileges have all been granted to thee in order that thou discreetly use the common blessings to their fullest extent, and in order that thou mayest understand, how

thankful thou must be to my most holy Son and Lord, and how thou shouldst strive to make as great a return for his goodness, as if He had come from heaven to redeem thee alone and as if He had instituted all his wonders and doctrines in the holy Church for none else than thee (Gal. 7, 12).

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOOLISH FORGETFULNESS OF MEN.

My daughter, forgetfulness and inattention regarding the works of the Redeemer are as reprehensible as they are common and frequent among mortals. Yet these works are most mysterious, loving, merciful and instructive. Thou hast been called and chosen to receive knowledge and enlightenment for avoiding such dangerous and gross torpidity; therefore I wish, that in the mysteries thou hast just written, thou take notice of and ponder over the burning love of my most holy Son in communicating Himself to men as soon as He was born, in order to make them immediate partakers of the joyful fruit of his coming. Men do not know of this obligation, because few of them penetrate to the significance of this great blessing, just as there were few who saw the Word at his Birth and thanked Him for his arrival. They are not aware of the cause of their evil state and of their blindness, which neither was nor is to be ascribed to the Lord nor to any fault in his love, but to the sins and the bad dispositions of men. If their own bad dispositions would not impede or make them unworthy of this favor, the same light, which was given to the just, to the shepherds and to the kings, would have been vouchsafed to all or to many. That there should be so few, will make thee understand in what an unhappy condition the world was at the time of the coming of the incarnate Word; and also the unhappiness of the present times, when these mysteries have become so evident and when grateful memory of them is become so scarce.

Consider the wicked disposition of mortals in the present age, in which the light of the Gospel has been spread out and confirmed by so many miracles wrought by God in his Church. In spite of all this there are so few, who are perfect and who seek to dispose themselves for greater participation in the fruits and benefits of the Redemption. Although the number of fools is so great and the vices are become so measureless, there are those who think, that also the perfect are numerous, because, forsooth, men do not so openly dare to act in opposition to God: there are fewer than one thinks, and many less than there should be, seeing that God is so much offended by the infidels and continually desires to communicate the treasures of grace in his Church according to the merits of his Onlybegotten made man. Be mindful, dearest, of the obligation imposed upon thee by thy clear knowledge of these truths. Live cautiously, with great attention and watchfulness correspond to his graces, losing no time, occasion or circumstance for acting in the most holy and perfect manner known to thee; for thou canst not fulfill thy duty otherwise. Remember what I tell thee, command and urge upon thee, that thou receive not such great favor in vain (II Cor. 6, 1); do not allow thy grace and light to be without profit, but make use of them in the perfection of thankfulness.

CHAPTER XII.

CONVERSE WITH CHRIST.

My daughter, I see thee full of devout emulation of the happiness, which the intercourse with my Son afforded me, my spouse and the holy angels, since we beheld Him present to our bodily eyes as thou desirest for thyself, if it were possible. I wish to console thee and guide thy affections toward that which thou thyself canst and shouldst do according to thy condition in order to attain the same happiness which thou covetest in us. For this purpose, beloved, recall what thou hast already sufficiently understood concerning the ways of God in raising up those souls, whom He seeks with paternal love and affection. Thou hast attained this knowledge by being favored with so many particular calls and enlightenments of the Lord, wherein He continually waits at the portals of thy heart, and urges thee onward expecting thy conversion (Wis. 8, 15). Thou hast seen Him drawing thee to Himself by repeated favors and by most exalted doctrines, selecting thee for the narrow bands of his loving intercourse (Coloss. 3, 14); and the great purity due to this concession.

Faith likewise teaches thee, that God is present in all places by his essence and by the power of his Divinity; and that to Him are open all thy thoughts, thy desires and sighs without exception. If thou co-operate with this truth so as to preserve the graces, which thou receivest through the sacraments and other channels divinely instituted, the Lord will remain with

thee also by divine and special assistance; and in it He will regale thee with his love as his chosen spouse. Now since thou knowest and understandest all these truths, tell me, what more canst thou envy or desire, when thou already possessest all that thou so anxiously sighest after? What I require of thee, and all that remains for thee to do, is, that thou exert thyself in holy emulation to imitate this intercourse and reproduce in thyself the disposition of the angels, the purity of my husband, and to copy in thyself my life, as far as possible, in order to be a fit dwelling-place of the Most High (I Cor. 3, 17). Thou must direct all those endeavors, all those desires and exertions, with which thou wouldst have wished thyself to be animated if thou hadst seen and adored my most holy Son in his birth and infancy, toward the fulfillment of this doctrine; for if thou imitatest me, thou mayest rest secure, that thou hast me as a Teacher and the Lord for an assured possession of thy soul. In this assurance thou canst speak to Him, embrace Him and delight thyself with Him, as with One who is present; for in order to communicate these delights to the pure and untainted souls He has assumed human flesh and become a Child. But always look upon Him as the great God, though a Child, in order that thy caresses may be guarded by reverence and thy love accompanied by holy fear; for the one is due to Him as God, and the other befits his immense bounty and merciful magnificence.

In this manner of intercourse thou must continue without intervals of lukewarmness, lest thou disgust Him. Thy legitimate and chosen occupation should be none other than the love and the praise of the infinite God. All the rest thou must enter into only sparingly, in such a way as if visible and earthly things scarcely concerned thee and cannot detain thee even for a moment. Thou

must maintain thyself in this soaring height, so that thou seem not to have anything earnestly to attend to, except to seek the highest and true God. Me thou shouldst imitate and for God alone thou shouldst live; all the rest should not exist for thee, nor shouldst thou exist for it. But the gifts and blessings, which thou receivest I wish thou dispense and communicate for the good of thy fellow-men, observing the perfect order of holy charity; thus thy gifts will not evaporate, but be still more increased (I Cor. 13, 8). In all this thou must keep the regulations, which befit thy condition and state, as I have already shown and instructed thee in other places at other times.

CHAPTER XIII.

DANGEROUS FAMILIARITY WITH HOLY THINGS.

My daughter, I wish to renovate in thee the enlightened teaching which thou hast received in order that thou mayst treat with thy Spouse in the highest reverence; for humility and reverential fear should increase in the soul in the same measure in which especial and extraordinary favors are conferred upon it. On account of not being mindful of this truth, many souls either make themselves unworthy or incapable of great blessings, or, if they receive them, grow into a dangerous rudeness and torpidity, which offends the Lord very much. The loving sweetness with which the Lord often treats them engenders in them a certain presumption and disrespectful forwardness, causing them to deal with his infinite Majesty in an irreverent manner, and with a vain desire of searching and inquiring into those hidden ways of God which are far above their comprehension and capacity. They fall into this presumption because they judge of the familiar intercourse with God according to the imperfect insight of mortals, presuming to regulate it after the friendly intercourse of human creatures with one another.

But in this way of judging the soul is much deceived, measuring the reverence and respect due to the infinite Majesty by the familiarity and equality caused by the human love of mortals to one another. The rational creatures are by nature equal to each other, although the conditions and circumstances of each may be different; and the familiarity of human love and

friendship may disregard the accidental differences in yielding to the human feelings. But the love of God must ever be mindful of the immeasurable excellence of the infinite Being, since its object is as well the infinite goodness as the infinite majesty of God: for just because the goodness and majesty in God are inseparable, therefore also reverence must not be separated from love of God in the creature. The light of divine faith must always go before, manifesting to the one that loves the greatness of the Object loved, awakening and fomenting reverential fear, restraining the exuberance of blind affections, and bridling them by the memory of the excellence and superiority of the Beloved.

If the creature is noble-hearted, practiced in and accustomed to holy and reverential fear, it is not in such danger of forgetting the respect due to the Most High, no matter how great the favors it receives; for it does not give itself up unguardedly to the spiritual delights and does not lose, on account of them, the discreet consciousness of the supreme Majesty; but it respects and reverences Him in proportion to the greatness of his divine love and enlightenment. With such souls the Lord converses as one friend with another (Exod. 33, 11). Let it therefore, my daughter, be to thee an inviolable rule that the closer the embraces, and the greater the delights with which the Most High visits thee, so much the more unremitting shall be the consciousness of his immutable and infinite Majesty, extolling and loving Him at one and the same time. In this wise consciousness thou wilt learn to know and estimate more becomingly the greatness of his favors. Thou wilt avoid the dangerous presumption of those who lightly inquire into the secrets of the Lord at each trivial or even important event, imagining that his most wise Providence

should pay attention to or regard the vain curiosity excited by some passion or disorder, or some human and reprehensible affection far removed from holy zeal and love.

Take notice of the cautiousness with which I proceeded in my duties; since, as regards finding grace in the eyes of the Lord, a vast difference always remains between the efforts of other creatures and my own. Nevertheless, though I held in my arms God himself as his true Mother, I never presumed to ask Him to explain to me anything whatever by extraordinary revelation, neither for the sake of knowing it or for the sake of ridding myself of suffering, nor for any other merely human reason; for all this would have been human weakness, vain and vicious curiosity, which could find no room in me. Whenever necessity urged it upon me for the glory of his Majesty, or some circumstances made it unavoidable, I asked permission to propose my wishes. Although I always found Him most propitious, ready to answer me with kindness and mercifully urging me to declare my wishes, I nevertheless humiliated myself to the dust and merely asked Him to inform me of what was most pleasing and acceptable in his eyes.

Write this doctrine in thy heart, my daughter, and guard thyself against the disorderly and curious desire of searching into or knowing anything above the powers of the human intellect. For besides the fact that the Lord makes no response to such foolish inquiry, because it displeases Him very much, remember that the demon is the real author of this fault in those who are in pursuit of a spiritual life. As he is ordinarily the author of such blameworthy inquiries, astutely promoting them in the soul, he also satisfies its curiosity by answering them himself at the same time assuming the

appearance of an angel of light and thus deceiving the imperfect and the unwary (II Cor. 12, 14). When such inquisitiveness arises from one's own natural inclination, one must be equally careful not to follow or attend to it. For in what concerns such high matters as familiar intercourse with the Lord, one's own reason and judgment is not a safe guide, it being hampered by evil inclinations and passions. Our depraved and infected nature has been thrown into great disorder by sin, and is subject to much confusion and excess, making it unfit for guidance and direction in the high things of God. Equally wrong is it for the soul to rely on divine revelations in order to free itself from suffering and labor; for the spouses of Christ and his true servants must not seek his favors for the purpose of avoiding the cross, but in order to seek and bear it with the Lord (Matth. 14, 24), patiently enduring the sufferings which his divine Providence chooses to send. This course of action I desire thee to maintain in humble fear, and rather to go to extremes in this regard so as to avoid so much the more securely the opposite fault. From now on I wish that thou perfect all thy motives and thy undertakings by divine love (Phil. 1, 9), as being the great end of all thy undertakings. In this thou needst not observe degree or measure; on the contrary I wish thee to create in thee an excess of love, accompanied by so much of holy fear as will suffice to keep thee from transgressing the law of the Most High, and to perform all thy exterior and interior acts in rectitude. Be careful and diligent therein, even if it cost thee much exertion and pain; for I have endured the same in the Circumcision of my most holy Son, and for no other reason than because in his holy law this was manifested and intimated to me as the will of the Lord, whom we must in all things fully obey.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEMORY OF JESUS.

My daughter, I wish thee to consider attentively the blessed favor conferred upon thee by being informed of the solicitous care and attention which I lavished upon my most holy and sweetest Son in the mysteries just now described. The Most High does not give thee this special light in order only to be regaled by the knowledge of these mysteries; but in order to imitate me in all these things as a faithful handmaid and in order to distinguish thyself in rendering thanks for his works in the same measure as thou art distinguished in knowing them more fully. Ponder, then, dearest, upon the small return given for the love of my Son and Lord by mortals, and how forgetful of thanks even his faithful continue to be. Assume it as thy task, as far as thy weak powers allow, to render satisfaction for this grievous offense: loving Him, thanking Him and serving Him with all thy powers, for all the other men who fail to do so. Therefore thou must be an angel in promptitude, most fervent and punctual on all occasions; thou must die to all earthly things, eliminating and crushing all human inclinations and rising upon the wings of love to the heights of love designed for thee by the Lord.

Thou art not ignorant of the sweet efficacy contained in the memory of the works performed by my most holy Son: and although thou canst so copiously avail thyself of the light given thee to be thankful: yet, in order that thou mayest fear so much the more the

danger of forgetfulness, I particularly inform thee that the saints in heaven, comprehending by the divine light these mysteries, are astonished at themselves for not having paid more attention to them during their life. And if they were capable of pain, they would be deeply grieved for their tardiness and carelessness in not having set proper value upon the works for the Redemption, and for failing in the imitation of Christ. All the angels and saints, by an insight hidden to mortals, wonder at the cruelty of human hearts against themselves and against Christ their Redeemer. Men have compassion neither for the sufferings of the Lord, nor for the sufferings they themselves stand in danger of incurring. When the foreknown, in unending bitterness shall recognize their dreadful forgetfulness and their indifference to the works of Christ their Savior, their confusion and despair will be an intolerable punishment, and it alone will be a chastisement beyond all imagination; for they will then see the copiousness of the Redemption, which they have despised (Ps. 44, 11). Hear me, my daughter, and bend thy ears to these counsels and doctrines of eternal life. Cast out from thy faculties every image and affection toward human creatures and turn all the powers of thy heart and soul toward the mysteries and blessings of the Redemption. Occupy thyself wholly with them, ponder and weigh them, give thanks for them as if thou alone wert in existence, as if they had been wrought solely for thee, and singly for each human being in particular (Gal. 2, 20). Thus thou wilt find life and the way of life, proceeding thus thou canst not err; but thou shalt find therein the light of thy eyes and true peace.

CHAPTER XV.

AVOIDING TRIVIAL OCCUPATIONS.

My daughter, in the foregoing chapter, thou hast been instructed not to seek information from the Lord by supernatural means, neither in order to relieve any suffering, nor in order to satisfy a natural hankering of curiosity. Now I exhort thee likewise not to yield, for any of these reasons, to the desire of performing any exterior action according to the promptings of nature. For in all the activity of thy exterior faculties and senses thou must seek to moderate and subject thy inclinations, not yielding to them in their demands, although they may have the color of virtue or piety. I was in no danger of going to excess in these affections on account of my sinlessness; nor was there a want of piety in my desire of remaining in the cave, where my most holy Son had been born and had been circumcised. Yet I did not wish to express my desire, even when asked about it by my spouse; for I preferred obedience to this pious inclination, and I knew that it is more secure for the souls and more according to the pleasure of the Lord to seek his will in the counsel and decision coming from other, rather than in their own inclination. In me this course of action was advisable only on account of the greater perfection contained therein, but in thee and in other souls, who are subject to error in their judgment, this rule must be observed most rigorously, so as to prevent and avoid mistakes diligently and discreetly. For in their ignorance and pusillanimity men are easily carried

away by their feelings and inclinations toward insignificant things, and very often they occupy themselves with trifles as if they were important matters, and with vanities, as if they were realities. All such activity weakens the soul and deprives it of great spiritual blessings, of grace, enlightenment and merit.

This doctrine shalt thou write in thy heart together with all the others which I am to give thee. Seek to use it as a reminder of all that I did, so that as thou hast come to know it thou mayest also understand and execute it in thy life. Take notice of the reverence, love and solicitude, the holy and discreet fear, with which I conversed with my most holy Son. I always lived in this kind of watchfulness; and even after I had conceived Him in my womb, I never lost it out of sight, nor did the great love which He showed me diminish it in me. In this ardent desire to please Him my heart found no rest until it was entirely united and absorbed in the enjoyment of this my highest Good and ultimate End. Excepting at certain times, during which I rested in his love as in my sole joy, I invariably carried about with me this continual solicitude, like one who restlessly pursues his way, and who permits himself not to be delayed by anything that is useless or hinders the attainment of his desired object. So far was my heart from attaching itself to any earthly thing, or from following the inclination of the senses, that I lived as if I had not been composed of earthly substance. If other creatures are not free from passions, or do not overcome them as much as possible, let them not blame nature, but their own will: on the contrary, they justly incur the reproaches of weak nature; because, instead of governing and directing nature by the sovereign power of the will, they make no use of that power. They allow the natural inclinations to

involve them in disorders, abetting it by the free will and using their understanding to find still more dangerous occupations and occasions of ruin. On account of these pitfalls presenting themselves in mortal life, I warn thee, my dearest, not to hanker after or seek any of the visible things, although they may appear to thee necessary and most appropriate for the circumstances. Use all things, thy cell, thy garments, thy sustenance, and whatever else of this life, only in obedience and with the full consent of thy superiors; because the Lord requires this of thee; and it is also my pleasure to see thee apply all things for the service of the Omnipotent. According to these great rules which I have given thee thou must regulate all thy activity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FIRM ROCK OF CATHOLIC TRUTH.

My daughter, the events recorded in this chapter contain much for the instruction of kings and princes and for the other faithful; as for instance, the prompt obedience and humility of the Magi, which men should imitate, and the obdurate wickedness of Herod, which they are to fear and abhor; for each reaped the fruit of his actions. The kings reaped the fruit of justice and other virtues, which they practiced; while Herod reaped those of ambition and pride by which he had usurped the government, and of other vices into which he cast himself without restriction or moderation. But let this remark, together with the other teachings of the holy church, suffice for those that live in the world. To thyself must thou apply the doctrine contained in what thou hast written; always remembering that all the perfection of a Christian life must be founded upon the Catholic truths, and in the constant and firm acknowledgment of them, as they are taught by holy faith. In order to impress them upon thy heart, thou must profit of all that thou readest or hearest of the divine Writings, and of what is contained in the other devout and instructive books concerning the virtues. Thy faith thou must accompany by the practice and abundance of all good works, hoping ever in the visitation and coming of the Most High (Tit. 2, 13).

By such a disposition thy soul will be prepared in the manner I require of thee. For I desire that the

Almighty find in thee the sweet readiness to adopt whatever is manifested to thee, and to put in practice whatever may be enjoined without any human respect. I promise, that if thou follow my counsel as thou shouldst, I will be thy star and guide on the ways of the Lord, so that thou wilt quickly arrive at the vision and enjoyment of thy God and of thy highest good in Sion (Ps. 83, 8). In this doctrine, and in what happened to the devout kings of the Orient, there is contained a most effective means for the salvation of souls; yet this is known to few and heeded by a still smaller number of men. It is this: that the inspirations and enlightenments are usually sent by God to creatures in a certain order. At first some are sent to incite the soul to practice some of the virtues; if the soul corresponds, the Most High sends other and greater ones in order to move the soul to greater perfection in virtue; and thus, profiting from previous graces, the soul is disposed for still others, receiving ever greater helps and securing an increase of the favors of the Lord according as it corresponds to them. Thou wilt therefore understand two things: first, how great a damage it is to neglect the exercise of any virtue and not to practice perfection according to the dictates of the divine inspirations; secondly, how often God would give great assistance to the souls, if they would begin to correspond to the smaller ones; since He is as it were in expectation and hope that they will prepare for his greater ones (Apoc. 6, 20). For He wishes to deal with the soul according to his just judgments. But because they overlook this orderly manner of proceeding in his invitations He suspends the flow of his divine gifts and He refuses to the souls, what was intended for them if they had no placed an obstacle, allowing them to fall from one abyss to the other (Ps. 49, 8).

The Magi and Herod pursued opposite courses: the Magi met the first inspirations and graces by the practice of the good works; thus they disposed themselves by many virtues for being called and drawn by divine revelation to the knowledge of the mysteries of the Incarnation, the birth of the divine Word and the Redemption of the human race; and through this to the happiness and perfection of the way of life. But Herod, on the other hand, by his hard-heartedness and neglect of the helps, which God offered him for the practice of virtue, was drawn into the abyss of his measureless pride and ambition. These vices hurled him over such vast precipices of cruelty as to be the first one among men to seek the life of the Redeemer of the world under the cloak of simulated devotion and piety. In giving vent to his furious rage, he took away the life of the innocent children and attempted by so foul a measure to advance his damned and perverse undertaking.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PROPER USE OF TEMPORAL GOODS.

My daughter, great were the gifts which the Kings offered to my most holy Son; but greater still was the affection with which they offered them and the mystery concealed beneath them. On account of all this they were most acceptable to his Majesty. I wish that thou also offer up similar gifts, thanking Him for having made thee poor in condition and profession. For I assure thee, my dearest, there is no more acceptable gift to the Most High than voluntary poverty. There are very few in the world in our days who use well the temporal riches and offer them to their God and Lord with the generosity and love of these holy Kings. The poor of the Lord, so numerous in our day, experience and give witness how cruel and avaricious human nature has become; since in their great necessities they are so little succored by the rich. This gross uncharitableness of men offends the holy angels and grieves the Holy Ghost, since they are bound to witness the nobility of the souls so degraded and abased in the service of vile greed of gold with all its evil powers (Eccles. 10, 20). As if all things had been created for the individual use of the rich, they appropriate them to themselves and deprive the poor, their brothers springing from the same nature and flesh; and denying them even to God, who created and preserves all things, and who can give or take at will. It is most lamentable that while the rich might purchase eternal life with their possessions, they

abuse them to draw upon themselves damnation as senseless and foolish creatures (Luke 14, 9).

This evil is common among the children of Adam; and therefore voluntary poverty is so excellent and safe a remedy. By it, making man willing to part joyfully with his possessions for the sake of the poor, a great sacrifice is offered to the Lord. Thou also canst make such an offering of the things necessary for sustenance, giving a part of it to the poor and desiring, if it were possible by thy labor and sweat, to help all of them. Thy ceaseless offer, however, must be love, which is the gold; continual prayer, which is the incense; and the patient acceptance of labors and true mortifications, which is the myrrh. All that thou dost for the Lord, thou should offer up to Him with fervent affection and promptitude, without negligence or fear; for negligent works, and those not enlivened by love, are not an acceptable sacrifice in the eyes of his Majesty. In order to make those incessant offerings, it is necessary that divine faith and light continually inflame thy heart, having before thy eyes the great object of thy praise and exaltation, and the stimulus of love, by which thou art bound to the right hand of the Most High. Thus shouldst thou continue incessantly in this sweet exercise of love, so proper to the spouses of his Majesty; for their name implies such a continual payment of the debt of love and affection.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DETACHMENT FROM WORLDLY GOODS.

My daughter, by the divine light I knew, better than all other creatures, at what a low value the Most High esteems earthly blessings and riches. Therefore, in my holy liberty of spirit, I felt myself troubled and inconvenienced by the possession of the treasures of the Kings offered to my most holy Son. As in all my deeds I was to shine in humility and obedience, I did not wish to appropriate them to myself, nor dispose of them according to my own will, but according to the wishes of my spouse Joseph. In this resignation I managed to act as if I were his handmaid and as if none of these gifts concerned me in any way; for it is debasing, and for you weak creatures, very dangerous to appropriate or attribute any of the goods of the earth, be they of material possessions or goods of honor; for all this cannot be done without covetousness, ambition and vain ostentation.

I wished to tell thee all this, my dearest, in order that thou mayest know how to refuse riches or honor as due to thee, and not appropriate to thyself any of them; especially not if thou receive them from persons of influence and exalted station. Preserve thy interior liberty and make no show of a thing which is worth nothing and which cannot justify thee before God. If anything is brought to thee, never say: "This is given to me, or is presented to me;" but "This the Lord sends to our convent; pray to God for those, whom his Majesty has sent as the instruments of his mercies." And mention the name of the giver, in order that they may pray particularly for him and that he may not be disappointed in

the purpose of his gift. Also do not receive it personally, lest you raise a suspicion of covetousness, but let those appointed for this duty receive it. And, if in thy office as superior, thou must make distribution of things within the convent, let it be with detachment and without any show of personal rights of possession in them; yet at the same time, as one who knows that she does not deserve any favors, do not forget to thank the Most High and the giver. That which is brought to the other religious thou must acknowledge thankfully as the superior and immediately see that thou apply it for the community, without reserving any part of it for thy own use. Do not inquire curiously about the incomes of the convent, in order that thou mayest not take a sensible pleasure therein and that thou mayest not seek delight in the reception of such favors; for frail and passionate nature incurs many defects in such a transaction and of few of the defects does it render much account to itself. Nothing can be trusted to infected human nature; for it always seeks after more than it possesses, and it never says enough, and the more it receives the greater thirst it has for more.

But it is to the intimate and frequent intercourse with the Lord by unceasing love, praise and reverence, that I wish thee to attend most of all. In this I wish, my daughter, that thou work with all thy strength, and that thou apply thy faculties and powers incessantly with great watchfulness and care; for without this the inferior parts will inevitably weigh down thy soul, derange and upset it, divert and cast it down, causing it to lose the vision of the highest Good (Wis. 9, 15). This loving intercourse of the Lord is so delicate, that even by listening or attending to the deceits of the enemy, the soul loses it. On this account the enemy makes great

efforts to draw thy attention toward himself, knowing that the punishment of listening to him will be the concealment of the object of its love from the soul (Cant. 5, 6). As soon as it carelessly ignores the beauty of the Lord, it enters upon the byways of neglect and is deprived of the divine sweetness (Cant. 1, 7). When afterwards the soul, having with sorrow experienced the evils of such inadvertence wishes to return to seek Him, it does not always find or recover Him (Cant. 3, 1, 2). As the demon, who deceived it, then presents other delights so vile and unlike those to which the soul has been accustomed interiorly, new cause of sadness, disturbance, dejection, lukewarmness and dissatisfaction arises and its whole interior is filled with dangerous confusion.

Of this truth, my dearest, thou thyself hast some experience, wherein thou couldst notice the effects of neglect and tardiness in believing the favors of the Lord. It is time that thou be prudent in thy sincerity and constant in keeping up the fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6, 12), without ever losing sight for a moment of that same Object, which I attended to with all the powers of my soul and all my faculties. Although the distance between thy conduct, that of a mere wormlet, and that which I propose for thy imitation is great, and although thou canst not enjoy the supreme Good so unreservedly as I, nor live in the same condition as I; yet, since I instruct thee and show thee what I did to assimilate myself to my most holy Son, thou canst imitate me according to thy strength using my doings as a mirror. I saw Him in the mirror of his humanity, thou in my soul and person. If the Almighty calls and invites all men to the highest perfection by following Him, consider what thou art obliged to do, since thou hast been drawn toward the Most High by such a generous and powerful influence of his right hand (Matth. 11, 28; Cant. 1, 3).

CHAPTER XIX.

FERVOR IN GOD'S SERVICE.

My daughter, one of the misfortunes, which deprive souls of happiness, or at least diminish it, is that they content themselves with performing good works negligently or without fervor, as if they were engaged in things unimportant or merely accidental.' On account of this ignorance and meanness of heart few of them arrive at an intimate friendship of God, which they can attain only by fervent love. This is called fervent precisely because of its similarity to boiling water. For just as water is made to boil and foam by the fire, so the soul, by the sweet violence of the divine conflagration of love, is raised above itself and above all created things as well as above its own doings. In loving, it is more and more inflamed, and from this very love springs an unquenchable affection, which makes the soul despise and forget all earthly things while at the same time it becomes dissatisfied with all temporal goodness. And as the human heart, when it does not attain what it dearly loves (if that attainment is possible) is inflamed with ever greater desire of reaching it by other means; therefore, the loving soul, finds ever new things to strive after for the sake of the Beloved and all service will seem to it but little. Thus it will pass from good will to a perfect will, and from this to what will please the Lord still more, until it arrives at the most intimate union with Him and at a perfect conformation with the will of God.

Hence thou wilt understand, my dearest, why I desired to go barefooted to the temple, carrying at the same time my most holy Son in order to present Him there; and why I also wished to comply with the law of the purification; for, urged on by my love, which incessantly demanded what was most perfect and agreeable to the Lord, I sought the fullness of perfection in all my doings and it was precisely this anxiety which created in me such a desire of excellence in all my works. Labor to imitate me with all diligence in all that I did; for I assure thee, my dear, that it is this exercise of thy love, which the Most High is desiring and expecting of thee, and, as is mentioned by the spouse in the Canticles (Cant. 2, 9), He is watching thee so close at hand, that not more than a slight screen intervenes between the soul and its vision of the Lord. Enamoured and drawn onward He approaches closely to those souls, who thus love and serve Him in all things, while He withdraws from the lukewarm and negligent ones, or deals with them only according to the general rules of his divine Providence. Do thou aspire continually to the most pure and perfect in the practice of virtues and study and invent new schemes and projects of love; so that all the forces of thy interior and exterior faculties continue to be zealously occupied in what is most exalted and excellent in the service of the Lord. At the same time mention all these affections to thy spiritual father and subject them to the obedience and advice of thy counselor, following his instructions: for this will always be the most preferable and secure way.

CHAPTER XX.

EMBRACING THE CROSS.

My daughter, the doctrine and example contained in the foregoing chapter will teach thee to strive after the constancy and expansion of heart, by which thou mayest prepare thyself to accept blessings and adversity, the sweet and the bitter with equanimity. O dearest soul! How narrow and unwilling is the human heart toward that which is contrary and distasteful to its earthly inclinations! How it chafes in labors! How impatiently it meets them! How insufferable it deems all that is contrary to its desires! How persistently it forgets, that its Teacher and Master has first accepted sufferings, and has honored and sanctified them in his own Person! It is a great shame, yea a great boldness, on the part of the faithful, that they should abhor suffering, even after my most holy Son did suffer for them and when so many of the just before his Death were led to embrace the cross solely by the hope that Christ would once suffer upon it, although they would never live to see it. And if this want of correspondence is so base in others, consider well, my dearest, how vile it would be in thee, who art so anxious to obtain the grace and the friendship of the Most High; who desirest to merit the name of a spouse and friend of God, who wishest to belong entirely to Him and that He belong entirely to thee, who wishest to be my disciple and that I be thy Teacher, who aspirest to follow and imitate me, as a faithful daughter her mother (Matth. 7, 21). All this must not result in mere senti-

ment and in empty words, or oft-repeated exclamations of: Lord, Lord; and, when the occasion of tasting the chalice and the cross of suffering is at hand, thou must not turn away in sorrow and affliction from the sufferings, by which the sincerity of a loving and affectionate heart is to be tried.

All this would be denying in your actions, what you profess in your words, and it would be a swerving from the path of eternal life: for thou canst not follow Christ, if thou refusest to embrace the cross and rejoice in it, nor shalt thou find me by any other way (Matth. 8, 34). If creatures fail thee, if temptation or trouble assail thee, if the sorrows of death encompass thee (Ps. 17, 5), thou must in no wise be disturbed or disheartened; since nothing displeases my most holy Son or me more than placing a hindrance or misapplying the grace given by Him for thy defense. By misusing it and receiving it in vain, thou yieldest great victory to the demon, who glories much in having disturbed or subjected any soul that calls itself a disciple of Christ and of me; and having once brought thee to default in small things, he will soon oppress thee in greater ones. Confide then in the protection of the Most High and press onward trusting in me. Full of this trust, whenever tribulation comes over thee, fervently exclaim: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? (Psalm 26, 1). He is my Helper, why should I hesitate? I have a Mother, a Queen and Mistress, who will assist me and take care of me in my affliction."

In this security seek to preserve interior peace and keep forever in thy view my works and my footsteps for thy imitation. Remember the sorrow, which pierced my heart at the prophecies of Simeon, and how I remained in peace and tranquillity, without any sign of

disturbance, although my heart and soul were transfixed by a sword of pain. In every event I sought motives for glorifying and adoring his admirable wisdom. If the transitory labors and sufferings are accepted with joy and with serenity of heart, they spiritualize the creature, they elevate it and furnish it with a divine insight; by which the soul begins to esteem affliction at its proper value and soon finds consolation and the blessings of mortification and of freedom from disorderly passions. This is the teaching of the school of the Redeemer, hidden from those living in Babylon and from those who love vanity (Matth. 5, 25). I wish also that thou imitate me in respecting the priests and ministers of the Lord, who in the new law hold a much higher dignity than in the old, since the divine Word has now united Itself with human nature and become the eternal High-Priest according to the order of Melchisedech (Ps. 109, 4). Listen to their words and instructions, as God requires, whose place they take. Consider the power and authority given them in the Gospels, where it is said: "Who hears you, hears Me; who obeys you obeys Me" (Luke 10, 16). Strive after the perfection they teach thee. Ponder and meditate without intermission upon that, which my most holy Son suffered, so that thy soul be a participant in his sorrows. Let the pious memory of his sufferings engender in thee such a disgust and abhorrence of all earthly pleasures that thou despise and forget all that is visible, and instead, follow the Author of eternal life.

CHAPTER XXI.

HUMBLE THANKSGIVING.

My daughter, what thou must especially learn from this chapter is, that thou accustom thyself to humble thanksgiving for the benefits which thou receivest, since thou, among many generations, art so specially signalized by the riches of grace with which my Son and I visit thee without any merit of thine. I was wont to repeat many times this verse of David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 15, 12). In such sentiments I humiliated myself to the dust, esteeming myself altogether useless among creatures. Therefore, if thou knowest what I did as Mother of God, consider what then is thy obligation, since thou must with so much truth confess thyself unworthy and undeserving of all thou receivest, and so poorly furnished for giving thanks and for making payment. Thou must supply thy insufficiency and thy misery by offering up to the eternal Father the living host of his onlybegotten Son, especially when thou receivest Him in the holy Sacrament and possessest Him within thee: for in this thou shouldst also imitate David, who, after asking the Lord what return he should make for all his benefits, answers: "I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. 115, 13). Thou must accept the salvation offered to thee and bring forth its fruits by the perfection of thy works, calling upon the name of the Lord, offering up his Onlybegotten. For He it is who gave the virtue of

salvation, who merited it, who alone can be an adequate return for the blessings conferred upon the human race and upon thee especially. I have given Him human form in order that He might converse with men and become the property of each one. He conceals Himself under the appearances of bread and wine in order to accommodate Himself to the needs of each one, and that each one might consider Him as his personal property fit to offer to the eternal Father. In this way He furnishes to each one an oblation which no one could otherwise offer, and the Most High rests satisfied with it, since there is not anything more acceptable nor anything more precious in the possession of creatures.

In addition to this offering is the resignation with which souls embrace and bear with equanimity and patience the labors and difficulties of mortal life. My most holy Son and I were eminent Masters in the practice of this doctrine. My Son began to teach it from the moment in which He was conceived in my womb. For already then He began to suffer, and as soon as He was born into the world He and I were banished by Herod into a desert, and his sufferings continued until He died on the Cross. I also labored to the end of my life, as thou wilt be informed more and more in the writing of this history. Since, therefore, We suffered so much for creatures and for their salvation, I desire thee to imitate Us in this conformity to the divine will as being his spouse and my daughter. Suffer with a magnanimous heart, and labor to increase the possessions of thy Lord and Master, namely, souls, which are so precious in his sight and which He has purchased with his life-blood. Never shouldst thou fly from labors, difficulties, bitterness and sorrows, if by any of them thou canst gain a soul for the Lord, or if thou canst thereby

induce it to leave the path of sin and enter the path of life. Let not the thought that thou art so useless and poor, or that thy desires and labor avail but little, discourage thee; since thou canst not know how the Lord will accept of them and in how far He shall consider Himself served thereby. At least thou shouldst wish to labor assiduously and eat no unearned bread in his house (Prov. 31, 27).

CHAPTER XXII.

PATIENCE UNDER PERSECUTIONS.

My dearest daughter, for thy instruction and imitation I wish, in what thou hast written, that thou take as an example the affectionate wonder which the divine light caused in my soul at seeing my most holy Son subject Himself to the inhuman fury of wicked men, such as was shown by Herod in this occasion of our flight from his wrath and afterwards by the perverse servants of the high priests and magistrates. In all the works of the Most High his greatness, goodness and infinite wisdom shine forth. But, since my understanding, by means of the most exalted inspiration, penetrated so deeply into the very essence of God in the person of the Word united to the Divinity, and since I knew that my most holy Son was the eternal, all-powerful, infinite Creator and Preserver of all things, and that this iniquitous king depended for his life and existence entirely upon this very beneficence, I was particularly struck with wonder to see the most sacred humanity pray and beseech his eternal Father to confer upon Herod, at this very time, enlightenment, help and blessing; to see my Son, who had it so much in his power to punish him, by his prayers prevent the full measure of chastisement which he deserved. Although Herod's purpose was frustrated, yet this obstinate reprobate was visited with less chastisement than would have been given to him if my holy Son had not prayed for him. All this, and whatever else is contained in this matchless mercy and kindness of

Jesus, I sought to imitate; for as a Teacher He taught me thus early what He afterwards inculcated by his actions, words and example concerning the love of enemies (Matth. 5, 44). When I perceive how he concealed and disguised his infinite power, and how, being the invincible Lion, He became a meek and humble Lamb (Is. 5, 29), amidst the fury of ravenous wolves, my heart was overwhelmed and my faculties failed me in the ardent desire of loving Him, imitating and following Him in his love, charity, patience and meekness.

This example I place before thee for thy constant imitation, so that thou mayest understand to what extremes thou must be willing to bear and suffer, forgive and love all who offend thee; for neither thou nor other creatures are innocent and without fault, and many are burdened with numerous and oft-repeated sins, by which they have merited all offenses and insults. Now, if persecutions afford thee the advantage of imitating Him, why shouldst thou not esteem them as a great blessing? Why shouldst thou not love those who give thee occasion to practice this highest perfection, why not thank them for this benefit, and hold them not as enemies but as benefactors, who afford thee a chance to obtain what is of so much importance for thy welfare? On account of the object-lesson contained in this history, thou wilt not be without guilt if thou fall short in this matter; for the divine light, and all that thou perceivest and understandest through it, is as it were before thy eyes, as in a living example.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOD'S FATHERLY PROVIDENCE.

My daughter, just as those who know the Lord also know how to trust in Him, so those who do not hope in his goodness and immense love have no perfect knowledge of the Majesty of God. On account of the want of faith and hope, this love also is deficient; for we readily place our love in whom we have confidence and whom we esteem. In this error lies the source of all the damage done to mortals; for they have such a low conception of the infinite bounty, which gave them being and which preserves them, that they fail to place full confidence in their God. Failing in this, they also fail in the love due to Him and they divert it toward the creatures. They esteem in them what they are seeking, namely power, riches, vain honor and ostentation. Although the faithful can remedy these injurious influences by faith and hope, yet they allow these virtues to remain dead, and unused, and debase themselves to the level of worthless creatures. Those who have riches, trust in them, and those who have none, greedily haste after them; some procure them by very reprehensible ways and means; some confide in influential persons, praising and flattering them. And thus it happens that very few seek the Lord in such a way as to deserve his providential care; very few trust in God and acknowledge Him as their Father, who is willing to provide for his children, who will nourish and sustain them without fail in all necessities.

This deceitful error has filled the earth with lovers

of the world; has filled it with avarice and concupiscence against the law of the Creator; has made men insane in their desires; for all of them commonly strive after riches and earthly possessions; claiming thereby merely to satisfy their needs, which is only a pretext for hiding their want of interest in higher things. In reality they lie to themselves abominously, since they are seeking the superfluous; not what is really necessary, but what ministers to worldly pride. If men would confine their desires to what is really necessary, it would be unreasonable to put any confidence in creatures instead of placing it in God alone, who ineffably provides even for the young ravens with no less solicitude than if their crowings were prayers sent up to their Creator for help (Prov. 28, 8). Secure in this confidence, I was not alarmed in my exile and prolonged journey. Since I trusted in the Lord, He provided for me in the time of my need. Thou also, my daughter, who art aware of this exalted Providence, shouldst not afflict thyself in the time of need, nor neglect thy duties in order to make provision for them, nor confide in human efforts, nor in creatures. After having done what is required of thee, the most efficacious means is to confide in the Lord, without being disturbed or confused; hope patiently, even when help is somewhat delayed. It will always be at hand at a time when it will do most good, and when the paternal love of the Lord can manifest itself most conveniently and openly. Thus it happened with me and my spouse in the time of our destitution and necessity.

Those that do not bear with adversity and do not put up with privations, who turn toward dried up cisterns (Jer, 2, 5), trusting in deceit and in the powerful of this world; those that are not moderate in their desires and greedily covet what is unnecessary for the

sustenance of life; those that anxiously cling to what they possess, fearing that it may be diminished and withholding the alms due to the poor; all of them have reasons to dread lest divine Providence, showing Itself just as niggardly in caring for them as they are in their confidence and in their charities to the poor, deprive them of what they could otherwise easily expect to receive at its hands. But the Father in heaven, who lets the sun rise over the just and the unjust (Matth. 5, 45), and lets the rain fall on the good and the bad, nevertheless helps all, giving them life and nourishment. However, just as his blessings are distributed to the good and to the bad, so also it cannot be a rule with God to give greater temporal goods to the good and less to the bad. On the contrary He prefers that the chosen and predestined ones be poor (James 2, 5), both because they thus gain more merit and reward, and because there are few who know how to use wealth properly and who can retain it without inordinate greed. Although my most holy Son and I had nothing to fear from this danger, yet He wished to furnish this example to men and to teach them this science, through which eternal life comes to them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

My daughter, great and above all else to be esteemed, is the consolation of the faithful friends of my most holy Son, when they with lively faith and assurance are permitted to serve the Lord of lords and the God of gods, who alone holds power and dominion over all creation and who triumphs and reigns over his enemies. In this feeling of assurance the intellect is delighted, the memory is recreated, the will is rejoiced and all the powers of the devout soul enjoy the sweetness of the most exalted activity. For they are entirely taken up with this supreme Goodness, Holiness and infinite Power, which has need of none outside Itself and whose will governs all created things (II Mach. 14, 35, Apoc. 4, 11). O how many thousandfold blessings do those creatures lose who, forgetful of their true happiness, employ all the time of their life and all their powers in attending upon visible things, pursuing the momentary pleasures and seeking the apparent and deceitful goods of this world! In the knowledge and light vouchsafed to thee I would wish, my daughter, that thou withdraw thyself from this danger, and that thy intellect and memory occupy themselves continually with the reality of the existence of thy God. In this endless sea, engulf and annihilate thyself, repeating without cessation: "Who is like to God our Lord, that dwells on high and looks upon the humble in heaven and on earth?" (Ps. 112, 5). Who is like to Him, that is almighty and depends upon no one?

that humbles the proud, and casts down those whom the blind world calls powerful, that triumphs over the demon and hurls him to the abyss?

In order that thy heart may dilate so much the more upon these truths and attain a greater power over the enemies of the Most High and of thyself, I wish that, as far as is possible, thou imitate me, glorying in the victories and triumphs of his mighty arm and seeking thyself to have a share in those which he gains over this cruel dragon. No created tongue, not that of the seraphim, can describe what my soul felt when I beheld my most holy Son working such wonders against his enemies for the benefit of the souls blinded and terrorized by their errors and for the exaltation and honor of the Most High. In this jubilation I magnified the Lord; and in company with my Son I composed new hymns of praise as his Mother and as Spouse of the Holy Ghost. Thou art a daughter of the holy Church and a spouse of my most blessed Son, favored by his grace: it is therefore just that thou be zealous in acquiring this glory and honor for Him, striving against his enemies and battling for the triumphs of thy Spouse.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRUSTFUL DILIGENCE.

My daughter, I came into Egypt, where I knew no relations or friends, in a land of foreign religion, where I could offer no home or protection or assistance to my Son, whom I loved so much. It can easily be understood, then, what tribulations and hardships we suffered, since the Lord permitted them to come over Us. Thou canst not understand with what patience and forbearance We accepted them; and even the angels cannot estimate the reward I merited from the Most High by the love and resignation with which I bore them, and which were greater than if I had been in the greatest prosperity. It is true, I grieved much to see my husband in such necessity and want; but at the same time I blessed the Lord to be able to suffer them. In this most noble patience and joy of spirit I wish that thou imitate me whenever the Lord offers thee an occasion; and that thou learn to act with prudence interiorly and exteriorly, ordering well thy actions and thy thoughts, without hindrance to either of them.

When the necessities of life are wanting to those under thy charge, exert thyself properly to obtain them. If sometimes thou must sacrifice thy own tranquillity in fulfilling this obligation, thou needst not on that account lose thy peace of mind; especially if thou art mindful of what I have so often told thee: not to lose sight of the presence of the Lord; for by his divine light and grace, if thou art careful and preservest thy peace, thou

canst do all things. Whatever can duly be procured by human exertion, is not to be expected by a miracle, nor must one try to exempt himself from labor in the hope of a supernatural interference on the part of God; for the Lord sweetly concurs with the ordinary and natural course of created things. The labor of the body is serviceable to the soul as a sacrifice and as an increase of the merits due to that kind of activity. While at work the rational creature can praise God and adore Him in spirit and in truth (John 4, 23). In order to fulfill this duty, direct thy activity according to his pleasure, consult his will in regard to them, weighing them with the scales of the sanctuary and riveting thy attention upon the divine light which the Almighty infuses in thy soul.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WORKS OF MERCY.

My daughter, thou art full of wonder at the works of mercy which I exercised in Egypt, curing the sick of their infirmities and helping the poor in their necessities, in order to relieve them in body and soul. Thou wilt be able to understand how all this comported with my love of modesty and retirement, when thou takest into consideration the immense love that urged my most holy Son to hasten immediately after his birth to the assistance of these people and pour out over them his immense love in his longings for their salvation. This love He communicated to me, and thus made me an instrument of his power, or I should not have dared to enter upon such a great enterprise. For though I always preferred to abstain from speaking or communicating with others, yet the will of my Son and Lord governed me in all things. Of thee, my friend, I desire, that in imitation of me, thou work for the benefit and salvation of thy neighbors, seeking to follow me in the perfection and quality of my works. Thou needst not seek occasions, for the Lord will send them. In some extraordinary circumstances, however, thou mayst find it advisable to offer thy services. But seek to exert thy influence upon all, teach and exhort them according to thy light; not presuming to take upon thyself the office of a teacher, but of one that seeks to console, and one that pities the hardships of her brothers; as one who with much reserve and humility and with great charity seeks to exhort them to patience.

As for those under thy charge, exhort and reprove them, govern and direct them to greater and greater perfection of virtue and to fulfill the divine pleasure. For next to seeking thy own perfection, God wills that thou encourage and teach those under thy charge according to power and graces given to thee. Pray without ceasing for those to whom thou canst not speak; thus extending thy charity towards all men. Since thou canst not go outside to tend the sick, make up for it by taking care of those living with thee, zealously serving them personally in whatever pertains to their comfort and wants. Do not consider thyself above this service because thou art their superioress; for on this very account thou must act as their mother and show thy loving care as such toward all, while in other things thou must interiorly esteem thyself below them. Since the world ordinarily leaves the care of the sick to the most poor and despised, simply because it does not know the high value of this service; therefore I, too, assign to thee as to one who is poor and the least of all, this office of tending the sick, in order that thou mayest follow me in the performance of it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DANGER OF WORLDLY AMBITION.

My daughter, in what thou hast written I wish that thou learn a lesson from the very sorrow and apprehension with which thou hast performed this task. Well-founded is thy sorrow to see how such a noble creature as man, made according to the likeness and image of the Lord, endowed with such divine qualities, and gifted with the power of knowing, loving, seeing, and enjoying God eternally, should allow himself to be degraded and defiled by such brutal and abominable passions as to shed the innocent blood of those who can do no harm to any one. This should induce thee to weep over the ruin of so many souls; especially in the times in which thou livest, when that same ambition which incited Herod has kindled such great hatred and enmity among the children of the Church, occasioning the ruin of countiess souls and causing the waste and loss of the blood of my most holy Son, poured out for the salvation of men. Do thou bitterly deplore this loss.

But likewise be warned by what thou hast seen in others; ponder the effects of passions admitted into the heart; for if once they have mastered the heart, they will either smother it in lust when it finds success, or consume it with wrath at meeting any opposition. Fear thou, my daughter, this danger, not only on account of the results thou seest of ambition in Herod, but also on account of what thou seest going on every hour in other persons. Be very careful not to allow thyself to be mastered by

anything, be it ever so small; for in order to start a great conflagration the smallest spark is sufficient. I have often repeated to thee this same warning, and I shall continue to do so more often in the future; for the greatest difficulty in practicing virtue consists in dying to all that is pleasurable to the senses. Thou canst not be a fit instrument in the hands of the Lord, such as He desires thee to be, if thou dost not cleanse thy faculties even of the images of all creatures, so that they do not find entrance into thy desires. I wish it to be to thee an inexorable law that all things, except God, his angels and saints, be to thee as if they did not exist. These should be thy sole possession; on this account the Lord has opened to thee his secrets, honors thee with his familiarity and intimacy, and for this purpose also do I honor thee with mine, that thou neither live nor wish to live without the Lord.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOLY POVERTY.

My daughter, neither thyself nor all creatures together can ever comprehend the spirit of poverty of my most holy Son, and what He has taught me concerning it. But from what I have told thee thou canst understand much of the excellence of this virtue, which its Author and Teacher loved so much, and of the horror in which He holds the vice of covetousness. The Creator cannot hate the beings which He has created; but He knows in his wisdom the boundless damage caused in mortals by avarice and covetousness of visible things; and that this insane love would pervert the greater part of the human nature. His horror of this vice was in proportion to the number of sinners and foredoomed ones, who are lost by the vice of avarice and cupidity.

In order to meet this evil and provide some remedy against it, my most holy Son chose poverty, and taught it by word and by example of his admirable abnegation. Thus would the Physician justify his cause before men if they, for whom He prepared this means of safety and restoration, would neglect to take advantage of it. This same doctrine I taught and practiced during all my life, and upon it the Apostles founded the Church. Such was also the teaching and practice of the Patriarchs and Saints, who rejuvenated and confirmed religion in the Church; for all of them have loved poverty, as the only and most efficacious means of holiness. They have abhorred riches as the incentive to evil and the root of

all vices (I Tim. 6, 10). This poverty I wish thee to love and seek after with all diligence; for it is the adornment of the spouses of my most holy Son, without which I assure thee, my dearest, He will disavow and repudiate them as unworthy and far removed from Him. For it is preposterous to see a bride overflowing in riches and bedecked with jewels at the side of a poor and destitute bridegroom; nor can true love exist with such inequality.

It is clear that though thou wish to imitate me as a legitimate daughter, I, being myself poor, shall not recognize thee as my daughter if thou art not one in reality, nor shall I ever permit that in thee which I abhorred for myself. I remind thee also not to forget the blessings of the Most High, which thou hast received in such abundance; for if thou art not very attentive and solicitous in this duty, thou wilt be drawn into forgetfulness and gross rudeness by the bluntness and sluggishness inherent in the human nature. Renew many times a day the memory of his blessings, always giving thanks to the Lord with humble and loving affection. Especially memorable among his benefits are that He has called thee, waited for thee, dissembled and excused thy faults, and added thereto such oft repeated favors. This remembrance will cause in thee sweet and strong movements of love; and thou wilt find new grace and favor before the Lord, since He is so much pleased by a faithful and thankful heart. On the other hand, He is much offended if his kindnesses and blessings are not esteemed and appreciated; for, as He confers them in the fullness of his love, He desires a dutiful, loyal and loving return on the part of his creatures.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE INTERCESSION OF HOLY MARY.

My daughter, from the very beginning of this history of my life thou wast made to understand, that among other purposes, the Lord wished to call the attention of mortals to the debt contracted by their unfeeling forgetfulness of his divine love and of mine toward them. It is true that all his love is included and made manifest in his having died on the Cross for them, for this was the extremity of his immense charity (John 3, 16). But many ungrateful men are loath to remember even this blessing. For such and for all others the knowledge of what He did for them during the thirty-three years should be a new incentive and spur of love; since each of his acts was worth an infinite price and merited our eternal gratitude. The Almighty set me as a witness to all of them: and I assure thee, that from the first instant of his conception in my womb, He ceased not to clamor to the Father for the salvation of men. From that moment He began to embrace the Cross (Heb. 10, 5), not only in desire, but also as far as was possible in effect, placing Himself in the position of one crucified from his infancy and continuing these exercises during his whole life. I also imitated Him in this, joining Him in his prayers and labors for mankind and in the very first acts of his most sacred humanity by which He rendered thanks for the salvation of men.

Let therefore mortals beware, lest I, who was a Witness and Co-operatrix of this salvation, be not also a

Witness and Co-operatrix in the day of judgment, proclaiming how well justified is the cause of God with men. If on that day I most justly refuse my intercession to those, who have foolishly despised and forgotten so many and so great favors and blessings, the results of the divine love of my Son and my own: what answer, what excuse or evasion shall those then bring forward, who have been so well informed, so much admonished and enlightened by the truth? How can these ungrateful and pertinacious mortals expect mercy of the most just and righteous God, when He has given them sufficient and opportune time, invited them so often, called them, waited and worked for them, and conferred upon them immense blessings, while they abused and wasted all of them in the pursuit of vanity? Fear, my daughter, this, the greatest of all blindnesses. Refresh ever the memory of the most holy works of my Son and of me, and imitate them with all thy fervor. Continue the exercises of the cross under the guidance of obedience, in order to keep thyself mindful of what thou must imitate and give thanks for. Take notice at the same time, that my Son and Lord could have redeemed the human race without suffering so much and that He wished to increase his sufferings only on account of the immensity of his love for souls. The return for such condescension should be, that the creature content not itself with little, as is ordinarily the case with ignorant men. Add thou virtue to virtue and seek thereby evermore to meet all thy obligations, imitating the Lord and me in our labors for the salvation of the world. All thy merits offer up for souls, uniting them with his merits in the presence of the eternal Father.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE VICISSITUDES OF LIFE.

My daughter, while journeying at the command of the Lord from one country to another and during the works enjoined upon me, my heart was never troubled nor my spirit cast down; for I always held myself prepared to fulfill entirely the will of God. Although the Lord made known to Me his high ends, yet this was not always done at the beginning, thus permitting me to endure so much the greater sufferings; for in obeying the Lord no further reason is necessary than that the Lord Creator so commands and disposes. The souls must accustom themselves to look for this motive alone and to learn solely to please the Lord, without distinguishing between fortunate or unfortunate events and without looking to their own inclinations. In this kind of wisdom I wish that thou advance. In imitation of me and to satisfy thy obligations toward my most holy Son, do thou receive prosperity or adversity in this mortal life with unmoved countenance and with equanimity and peace of mind. Let not the one grieve, nor the other vainly rejoice thee; but attend only to all that which the Almighty ordains according to his pleasure.

Human life is interwoven thus variously with both kinds of events; some of them according, others contrary to the likings of mortals; some which they abhor, others which they desire. As the human heart is limited and narrow it immoderately inclines to extremes, bound-

lessly desiring what it loves and likes, and, on the other hand, grieving and sorrowing at what it abhors and dislikes. These changeful moods and fluctuations create danger for all or many virtues. The disorderly love for one creature which it cannot attain, moves the soul presently to desire another, expecting a balm for its disappointment in the former. And if it is successful, the soul becomes involved and flurried in the desire of retaining what it possesses, thus casting itself by these velleities into still greater disorders and passions. Attend, therefore, dearest, to this danger and attack it at the root by preserving thy heart independent and riveted only on the divine Providence, without ever allowing it to incline toward what it desires or longs for, or to abhor what is painful to it. Let the will of the Lord be thy only delight and joy. Let neither thy desires draw thee on, nor thy fears dishearten thee. Let not thy exterior occupations, and much less thy regard or attention to creatures, ever impede thee or divert thee from thy holy exercises, attending always to my example. Seek thou lovingly and diligently to follow in my footsteps.

BOOK FIVE

Lessons Given by the Queen in Connection with the History of Her Life
at Nazareth until the Baptism of Her Son

CHAPTER I.

TEACHINGS OF CHRIST.

My daughter, I see that thou art desirous of being a disciple of my most holy Son, since now thou hast understood and described my own behavior in this regard. For thy consolation take notice, that He has exercised this office of Teacher not only once and not only at the time, when He taught his holy doctrine while yet in mortal flesh, as is related in the Gospels (Matth. 28, 29) ; but that He continues to be the Teacher of souls to the end of the world. He admonishes, instructs, and inspires them, urging them to put in practice whatever is most perfect and most holy. Thus He acts toward all without exception, although according to his divine ordainment, and according to the disposition and attentiveness of each soul, every one receives more or less of the benefits (Matth. 11, 5). If thou hadst always applied this truth, thou wouldst have known by abundant experience, that the Lord does not refuse to act as the Teacher of the poor, of the despised and of the sinners, if they wish to listen to his secret doctrines. As thou now desirest to know what disposition He requires of thee in order to have Him teach Thee to thy heart's content, I shall in his name

inform thee of it. I assure thee, that if He shall find thee well disposed He will, as a true and wise Teacher, communicate to thee the plenitude of his wisdom and enlightenment.

First of all thou must keep thy conscience pure, undefiled, serene and quiet, keeping a constant watch against falling into any sin or imperfection throughout all the events of this life. At the same time thou must withdraw thyself and disentangle thyself from all that is earthly, so much so that (as I have already formerly admonished thee) thou do not retain any image or memory of human or visible things, but maintain the utmost sincerity, purity and serenity of heart. When thou thus hast cleared thy interior from the images and shadows of earthly things, then thou wilt pay attention to the voice of thy God like a beloved daughter, forgetting the voice of Babylon, the house of her father Adam and all the aftertastes of sin. I assure thee, that He will speak to thee words of eternal life (John 6, 69). It will be thy duty to listen to Him with reverence and humble gratitude; to appreciate his teachings, and to follow them in practice with all diligence and punctuality. Nothing can be hid from this great Master and Teacher (Heb. 4, 13), and He withdraws with disgust from those who are ungrateful and disobedient. No one must think that these withdrawals of the Most High always happen in the same way as they happened to me. For the Lord withdrew from me, not on account of any fault of mine, but out of exceeding love. He is accustomed to withdraw from other creatures in order to visit them with merited punishment for their many sins, outrages, ingratitude and negligences.

Therefore, my daughter, in gaging thy reverence and esteem for the teaching and enlightenment of thy

divine Master and for my own exhortations, thou must take into account thy omissions and faults. Moderate thy inordinate fears and do not any more doubt that it is the Lord, who speaks to thee and teaches thee, since his doctrine of itself gives testimony of its own truth and assures thee, that God is its Author; for thou seest that it is holy, pure, perfect and without error. It inculcates whatever is best and reprehends thy least fault, and it is moreover approved by thy instructors and spiritual directors. As I am thy Teacher, I wish that thou also, in imitation of me, come every morning and night humbly and sorrowfully to confess thy faults, in order that I may intercede for thee and as thy Mother obtain for thee the pardon of the Lord. As soon as thou commitest any imperfection, acknowledge it without delay and ask the Lord pardon, promising to amend. If thou attend to these things, which I here tell thee, thou wilt be a disciple of the Most High and of me as thou desirest to be. Purity of soul and the divine grace is the most exquisite and adequate preparation for partaking of the influences of divine light and science, and the Redeemer of the world communicates it to his true disciples.

CHAPTER II.

TRUE ENLIGHTENMENT.

My daughter, I call thee anew to be, from this day on, my disciple and my companion in the practice of the celestial doctrine, which my divine Son teaches his Church by means of the holy Gospels and other Scriptures. I desire of thee to prepare thy heart with new diligence and attention, so that like a chosen soil, it may receive the living and holy seed of the word of the Lord producing fruits a hundred-fold (Luke 8, 8). Make thy heart attentive to my words; and at the same time, let thy reading of the Holy Gospels be continual; meditate and ponder within thyself the doctrines and mysteries which thou perceivest therein. Hear the voice of thy Spouse and Master. He calls all men and invites them to the feast of his words of eternal life (John 6, 69). But so great is the dangerous deception of this mortal life, that only very few souls wish to hear and understand the way of light (Matth. 7, 14). Many follow the delights presented to them by the prince of darkness; and those that follow them know not whither they are led (John 12, 35). But thou art called by the Most High to the paths of true light; follow them by imitating me, and thou wilt have thy longings fulfilled. Deny thyself to all that is earthly and visible; ignore it and refuse to look upon it; have no desire for it and pay no attention to it; avoid being known, and let no creatures have any part in thee; guard thou thy secret (Is. 24, 16), and thy treasure (Matth. 13, 44) from the fasci-

nation of men and from the devil. In all this wilt thou have success, if, as a disciple of my most holy Son and of me, thou puttest in perfect practice the evangelical doctrine inculcated by Us. In order to compel thyself to such an exalted undertaking always be mindful of the blessing of being called by divine Providence to the imitation of my life and virtues and to the following of my footsteps through my instruction. From this state of a novice, thou must pass on to a more exalted state and to the full profession of the Catholic faith, conforming thyself to the evangelical law and to the example of thy Redeemer, running after the odor of his ointments and by his truth in the paths of rectitude. By first being my disciple thou shouldst prepare thyself for becoming a disciple of my Son; and both these states should lead thee to the perfect union with the immutable being of God. These three stages are favors of peerless value, which place thee in a position to become more perfect than the exalted seraphim. The divine right hand has conceded them to thee in order to dispose, prepare and enable thee to receive proper light and intelligence for recording the works, virtues, mysteries and sacraments of my life. Freely and without thy merit the Lord has shown thee this great mercy, yielding to my petitions and intercessions. I have procured thee this favor, because thou didst subject thyself in fear and trembling to the will of the Lord in obedience to thy superiors, who continued to give thee express commands for the writing of this history. Thy greatest reward is that thou hast learnt of the three stages or ways, which are so mysterious, hidden and exalted above carnal prudence and so pleasing to thy divine Master (Is. 24, 16). They contain most abundant instruction as thou thyself hast learnt and experienced for the at-

tainment of still higher ends. Do thou record them separately in a treatise for itself, according to the will of my most holy Son. Let its title be the same as what thou hast already mentioned in the introduction to this history: "Laws of the Spouse, crumbs of his chaste love, and fruits collected from the tree of life in this history."

CHAPTER III.

FERVOR IN DIFFICULTIES.

My daughter, if thou wilt deeply and attentively weigh thy obligations, thou wilt find very easy and sweet all the labors enjoined upon thee by the commands and precepts of the holy law of the Lord. This must be the first step of thy pilgrimage, as the beginning and foundation of all Christian perfection. But I have already many times reminded thee, that the fulfillment of the precepts of the Lord must not be cold and lukewarm, but most fervent and devoted. For this favor will prevent thee from being satisfied with common virtue, and excite thee to undertake works of purest love beyond that which God imposes upon thee by command. For this is one of the artifices of His wisdom, that He seeks to be obliged by his true servants and friends, in order that He may reward them, and this is what I desire of thee. Remember, dearest, that the journey from the mortal to the eternal life is long, painful and dangerous (Matth. 7, 14) : long, because it takes up the whole life, painful, on account of the hardships, dangerous, on account of human frailty and the astuteness of the enemies. In addition to this the time is short (I Cor. 7, 29), the end uncertain (Eccli. 9, 2), being either very happy, or most unfortunate (Matth. 25, 31), while the one as well as the other termination is irrevocable (Eccli. 11, 3). Since the sin of Adam the animal and earthly life of man is burdensome for all those that subject themselves to it (Job 7, 29), the chains of the passions

are strong, the war against the lower nature continual; sensible pleasures are always present and easily fascinate the faculties of man, while that which is noble, as well as its immediate consequences, is often hidden from the gaze. All this fills the pilgrimage of life with hazardous dangers and difficulties.

Among all these dangers and difficulties not the least are those of the flesh; for its human weakness, always present and always active, withdraws many from grace. The shortest and the most secure course to follow, both for thee and for all men, is to welcome bitterness and sorrow and put aside ease and pleasure of the senses, and inviolably to resolve not to allow them to become dissipated or enjoy greater freedom than the strict rule of reason permits. In addition to this thou must continually seek after the greater pleasure of the Lord and aspire to the great last end of all thy longings. For this purpose thou must always be solicitous to imitate me, for to this I call and invite thee, desiring that thou arrive at the summit of virtue and holiness. Consider the punctuality and fervor with which I achieved so many and so great results; not because the Lord urged me on by his commands, but because I wished to please Him more. Do thou also multiply thy deeds of fervor, thy devotions, thy spiritual exercises and in all things increase thy prayers and sacrifices to the eternal Father for the benefit of mortals. Help them also by the example and thy exhortations wherever thou canst. Console the sorrowful, encourage the weak, help the fallen to arise; and for all of them offer, if necessary, thy own life-blood. Above all strive to please my most holy Son, who suffers so kindly the ingratitude of men,

preserving them in existence and continuing to shower his favors upon them. Consider his invincible love toward them and how I imitated Him, and even now show toward them the same love. I desire of thee, that thou follow thy sweet Spouse in his exalted charity, and also me, who am thy Teacher.

CHAPTER IV.

SPIRITUAL DRYNESS.

My daughter, by oft-repeated experience mortals know, that they do not lose without sorrow what once they have possessed with delight. This truth, so well established, should convince men what little love they have for their God and Creator; since among the many who lose Him, there are so few who heartily grieve at this loss, and thereby show, that they have never possessed or loved Him with a love flowing from grace. Just as they fail to grieve at losing the highest Good, which they do not hold in loving possession, so they also fail to seek after their God when they have lost Him. But there is a great difference in the manner in which men lose sight of their highest Good; for it is not the same to lose sight of God for the purpose of being tried in virtue and love and to lose sight of Him in punishment for sins committed. The first is a contrivance of divine love and a means of communicating itself more abundantly to the one that longs for it and merits it. The second is a just punishment for outrages committed against the Divinity. In the first kind of absence the Lord humiliates the soul by holy fear and filial love leaving it uncertain, whether it has not given cause for his withdrawal (Prov. 28, 13). Although its conscience does not reprehend it, the loving and ingenuous heart knows its danger, feels the loss and thus, as the wise man says, is blessed (Eccli. 9, 1); for it then lives in constant fear and dread of such a loss, knowing that man,

until the end of this life, is uncertain, whether he deserves love or hate in the sight of God. During their mortal existence the just man and the sinner commonly share the same good and evil lot without much distinction.

This is the great evil which the wise man mentions as among the happenings under the sun; that the impious and the wicked harden their hearts in their malice and false security, seeing that the same mishaps befall both themselves and others, and that no one can tell with certainty who are the chosen or the reprobate, the friends or enemies, of God, the just or the sinners; who are worthy of love and who of hatred. But if men would dispassionately and without deceit appeal to their conscience, it would answer each one truthfully what he should know (Luke 12, 58); for when it cries out against sins committed, they would be foolish not to attribute the evils and adversities to themselves, or to fail to see themselves forsaken by grace and deprived of the highest Good. If their reason were unbiased, the greatest source of misgiving would be, to be unmoved by the loss or by the cessation of the spiritual joys of grace. For the want of this misgiving in a soul created and destined for eternal happiness is a strong indication that the soul neither desires nor loves this happiness, and therefore it is a sign, that it does not seek it in earnest, so as to enjoy a well-founded prospect of once possessing the highest Good. For thou must remember, that this well-founded assurance, of not having forfeited it in this mortal life, can be attained by all faithful souls.

I was deprived of the bodily presence of my most holy Son; but, although I was in hope of again finding Him, yet, in my great love, the uncertainty as to the cause of his withdrawal gave me no rest until I found

Him. In this I wish that thou, my dearest, imitate me, whether thou lose Him through thy own fault or by the disposition of his own will. So great should be thy dread of losing Him through thy fault, that neither tribulation, nor trouble, nor necessity, nor danger, nor persecution, nor the sword, neither height nor depth should ever withhold thee from seeking after thy God (Rom. 8, 35); for if thou art faithful as thou shouldst be, and if thou dost not wish to lose Him, neither the angels, nor the principalities, nor the powers, nor any other creature can ever deprive thee of Him. So strong are the bonds of his love and its chains, that no one can burst them, except thy own free will.

CHAPTER V.

UNCERTAINTY OF SALVATION.

My daughter, all the works of my most holy Son and my own actions are full of mysterious instruction and doctrine for the mortals who contemplate them diligently and reverently. The Lord absented Himself from me in order that, seeking Him in sorrow and tears, I might find Him again in joy and with abundant fruits for my soul. I desire that thou imitate me in this mystery and seek Him with such earnestness, as to be consumed with a continual longing without ever in thy whole life coming to any rest until thou holdst Him and canst lose Him no more (Cant. 5, 4). In order that thou mayest understand better this sacrament of the Lord, remember, that the infinite Wisdom made men capable of his eternal felicity and placed them on the way to this happiness, but left them in doubt of its attainment, as long as they have not yet acquired it, and thus filled them with joyful hope and sorrowful fear of its final acquisition. This anxiety engenders in men a lifelong fear and abhorrence of sin, by which alone they can be deprived of beatitude, and thus prevent them from being ensnared and misled by the corporeal and visible things of this earth. This anxiety the Creator assists by adding to the natural reasoning powers, faith and hope, which are the spurs of their love toward seeking and finding their last end. Besides these virtues and others infused at Baptism, He sends his inspirations and helps to keep awake the soul in the absence of its Lord and to prevent forgetfulness of Him and of

itself while deprived of his amiable presence. Thus it pursues the right course until it finds the great goal, where all its inclinations and longing shall be satiated.

Hence thou canst estimate the listless ignorance of mortals and how few stop to consider the mysterious order of the creation and justification and all the works of the Almighty tending toward this exalted end. From this forgetfulness flow so many evils endured by men while they appropriate so many earthly goods and deceitful delights, as if they could ever find in them their ultimate end. The height of perversity opposed to the order of the Creator, is that mortals in this transitory and short life rejoice in visible things as if they were their last end, while they ought, on the contrary, to make use of creatures to gain, not to lose, the highest Good. Do thou, therefore, my dearest, be mindful of this dangerous human folly. Consider all delights and joys of the world as insanity, its laughing as sorrow, sensible enjoyment as self deceit, as the source of foolishness, which intoxicates the heart and hinders and destroys all true wisdom. Live in constant and holy fear of losing eternal life and rejoice in nothing except in the Lord until thou obtainest full possession of Him. Fly from conversation with men and dread its dangers. If sometimes God places thee in the way of human intercourse for his glory and by obedience, although thou must trust in his protection, yet never be remiss or careless in guarding thyself from contamination. Do not trust thy natural disposition when there is question of friendship and close intercourse with others; in this consists for thee a greater danger; for the Lord has given thee a pleasing and mild disposition, so that thou mayest naturally incline toward Him, resist none of his intentions and make a proper return for the blessings bestowed upon thee. But as

soon as thou givest entrance to creatures into thy heart thou wilt certainly be carried away and alienated by them from the highest Good, and thou wilt pervert the intentions and operations of his infinite wisdom in thy behalf. It would certainly be most unworthy of thee to divert that which is most noble in thy nature toward an unseemly end. Raise thyself above all created things, and above thyself (Thren. 3, 28). Perfect the operations of thy faculties and set before them the exalted perfections of thy God, of my beloved Son and thy Spouse, who is beautiful among the sons of men (Ps. 44, 3). Love Him with all the powers of thy heart and soul.

CHAPTER VI.

IMITATION OF MARY.

My daughter, many times in the course of thy life, and especially while thou art writing this history of my own life, I have called upon thee and invited thee to follow me by the closest imitation possible to thee. I now renew this invitation and demand, for now thou hast by the condescension of the Most High received light and intelligence in this sacrament of his powerful arm in my heart: how He wrote therein the whole law of grace and all the doctrine of the Gospel, what effects this favor wrought in me, and how I corresponded by the closest and most perfect imitation of my most holy Son and Teacher. The knowledge of all this thou must consider as one of the greatest favors ever bestowed upon thee by the Lord. For in it thou wilt find the sum total and essence of the most exalted sanctity and perfection, reflected as in the clearest mirror. The paths of divine light will therein be revealed to thee, whereon thou 'canst walk secure from the darkness of ignorance enveloping other mortals.

Come then, my daughter, come and follow me. And in order that thou mayest imitate me as I desire and that thy understanding may be properly enlightened, thy spirit sufficiently ennobled and prepared, and thy will inflamed, separate thyself from all earthly things as thy Spouse wishes; withdraw thyself from what is visible, forsake all the creatures, deny thyself, close thy senses to the deceits and fabulations of the world (Ps. 39, 5).

And in thy temptations I exhort thee not to be troubled or afflicted very much; for if they cause thee to halt in thy course, they will already have gained a great advantage over thee and they will prevent thee from becoming strong in the practice of perfection. Listen therefore to the Lord alone, who is desirous of the beauty of thy soul (Ps. 44, 12); who is liberal in bestowing his gifts upon it, powerful to deposit therein the treasures of his wisdom, and anxious to see thee prepare thyself to receive them. Allow Him to write into thy heart the evangelical Law. Let that be thy continual study, thy meditation day and night, the sweet nourishment of thy memory, the life of thy soul and the sweet nectar for thy spiritual taste. Thus wilt thou obtain what the Most High and I require of thee, and what thou thyself desirest.

CHAPTER VII.

EVILS OF LIFE

The Most High, who in sheer goodness and bounty has given existence to all creatures and denies his providential care to none, faithfully supplies all souls with light, by which they can enter into the knowledge of Him and of eternal life, provided they do not of their own free will prevent and obscure this light by sin or give up the quest of the kingdom of heaven. To the souls, whom, according to his secret judgments, He calls to his Church, He shows himself still more liberal. For with the grace of Baptism He infuses into them not only those virtues, which are called essentially infused and which the creature cannot merit by its own efforts; but also those, which are accidentally infused and which it can merit by its own labors and efforts. These the Lord gives freely beforehand, in order that the soul may be more prepared and zealous in the observance of his holy Law. In other souls, in addition to the common light of faith, the Lord in his clemency grants supernatural gifts of knowledge and virtue for the better understanding of the evangelical mysteries and for the more zealous practice of good works. In this kind of gifts He has been more liberal with thee than with many generations; obliging thee thereby to distinguish thyself in loving correspondence due to Him and to humble thyself before Him to the very dust.

In order that thou mayest be well instructed and informed, I wish to warn thee as a solicitous and loving Mother of the cunning of satan for the destruction of these works of the Lord. From the very moment in which mortals begin to have the use of their reason, each

one of them is followed by many watchful and relentless demons. For as soon as the souls are in a position to raise their thoughts to the knowledge of their God and commence the practice of the virtues infused by Baptism, these demons, with incredible fury and astuteness, seek to root out the divine seed; and if they cannot succeed in this, they try to hinder its growth, and prevent it from bringing forth fruit by engaging men in vicious, useless, or trifling things. Thus they divert their thoughts from faith and hope, and from the pursuit of other virtues, leading them to forget that they are Christians and diverting their attention from the knowledge of God and from the mysteries of the Redemption and of life eternal. Moreover the same enemy instils into the parents a base neglectfulness and carnal love for their offspring; and he incites the teachers to carelessness, so that the children find no support against evil in their education, but become depraved and spoiled by many bad habits, losing sight of virtue and of their good inclinations and going the way of perdition.

But the most kind Lord does not forget them in this danger and He renews in them his holy inspirations and special helps. He supplies them with the holy teachings of the Church by his preachers and ministers. He holds out to them the aid of the Sacraments and many other inducements to keep them on the path of life. That those who walk in the way of salvation are the smaller number, is due to the vice and depraved habits imbibed in youth and nourished in childhood. For that saying of Deuteronomy is very true: "As the days of thy youth, so also shall thy old age be" (Deut. 33, 25). Hence the demons gain courage and increase their tyrannical influence over souls in the early years of man's life, hoping that they will be able to induce men to commit so much

the greater and the more frequent sins in later years, the more they have succeeded in drawing them into small and insignificant faults in their childhood. By these they draw them on to a state of blind presumption; for with each sin the soul loses more and more the power of resistance, subjects itself to the demon, and falls under the sway of its tyrannical enemies. The miserable yoke of wickedness is more and more firmly fastened upon it; it is trodden underfoot by its own iniquity and urged onward under the sway of the devil from one precipice to another, from abyss to abyss (Ps. 41, 8): a chastisement merited by all those, that allow themselves to be overcome by evil-doing in the beginning. By these means Lucifer has hurled into hell so great a number of souls and continues so to hurl them every day, rising up in his pride against the Almighty. In this manner has he been able to introduce into the world his tyrannical power, spreading among men forgetfulness of death, judgment, heaven and hell, and casting so many nations from abyss to abyss of darkness and bestial errors, such as are contained in the heresies and false sects of the infidels. Do thou therefore beware of this terrible danger, my daughter, and let not the memory of the law of thy God, his precepts and commands, and the truths of the Catholic Church and the doctrines of the Gospels ever fail in thy mind. Let not a day pass in which thou dost not spend much time in meditating upon all these; and exhort thy religious and all those who listen to thee to do the same. For thy enemy and adversary is laboring with ceaseless vigilance to obscure thy understanding in forgetfulness of the divine law, seeking to withdraw thy will, which is a blind faculty, from the practice of justification. This, thou knowest, consists in acts of living faith, trustful hope, ardent love, all coming from a contrite and humble heart (Ps. 50, 19).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOLY GOSPELS.

My daughter, it was proper that the Teacher of virtue should make known to us what He did, and that He should fulfill what He taught. For both word and action belong to the office of teaching. The words should instruct, while the example should move and give witness to the teaching, in order that it may be accepted and practiced. All this was fulfilled by my most holy Son, and by me in imitation of Him (Matth. 5, 9). As neither He nor I was to remain always upon this earth, He wished to leave behind Him the holy Gospels as a summary of his life and of mine, in order that the children of the light, by believing and practicing its teachings, might regulate their lives in imitation of his. For in it the practical results of the teachings of Christ are exhibited, such as they brought forth in me by imitating Him. Of great value are the sacred Gospels, and for this reason thou must look upon them with utmost veneration. I call thy attention to the fact, that my most holy Son and I are much honored and pleased to see the divine sayings and the doings of his life properly esteemed and respected among men. On the other hand, the Lord considers the forgetting and the neglecting of the doctrines contained in the Gospels a great injury done to Him by the children of the Church in our times. For there are many who do not listen or attend to them, who give no thanks for this blessing, and who make no more of them than if they were pagan writings, or as if they did not contain in them the light of faith.

Thy debt is great in this regard; for thou hast received insight into the veneration and esteem in which I held the evangelical doctrines, and thou wast made aware, how I labored in order to put them into practice. Thou hast not been able to learn all of what I practiced and understood, as thy capacity is too limited; yet remember at least, that with no entire nation have I been so condescending as with thee alone in lavishing this blessing. Therefore, be very careful how thou correspond with it, lest thou render fruitless the love which has been instilled into thee for the divine Scriptures, and particularly for the Gospels and their exalted doctrines. They are to serve thee as a shining beaconlight, and my life should be thy model for forming thy own. Take heed how important and necessary it is for thy welfare to attend to this with all diligence; how much pleasure thou canst thereby give to my Son and Lord, and how I shall consider myself obliged anew to treat with thee as a Mother and as a Teacher. Fear the danger of not attending to the divine calls, for that is the cause of the loss of innumerable souls. Since thou receivest so many and so wonderful calls from thy merciful and omnipotent God, how reprehensible will be thy rudeness, how abominable thou wilt make thyself to the Lord, to me and the saints, if thou fail to correspond with them!

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH.

My daughter, mortal mind is not capable of comprehending what I was made to feel through the infused knowledge and belief of the articles established by my most holy Son as those of the holy Church, and what were the effects wrought thereby upon my faculties. Necessarily, therefore, thy words fail thee in seeking to declare what thou hast understood concerning them; for all the concepts of the mind fall short of comprehending and expressing these mysteries. But what I desire and command, is this; that thou preserve with all reverence and solicitude the precious knowledge and understanding of these venerable sacraments. For as Mother I remind and warn thee of the cruel and cunning efforts of thy enemies to rob thee of them. Be thou ever on thy guard, that they may find thee full of strength, and that thy domestics, which are the faculties of thy body and mind, be clothed with the double vestments of interior and exterior watchfulness in order to be able to resist the onslaught of their temptation (Prov. 31, 17). The powerful arms for battling against those who make war on thee, must be the doctrines of the Catholic faith (Rom. 1, 17), for the firm belief in them and the continual exercise of them, the incessant meditation and remembrance of them, illumine the souls, drives away errors, disclose the deceits of satan and disperse his falsehoods just as the rays of the sun dispel the dark clouds. Moreover, all these exercises serve as substan-

tial nourishment of the spirit to strengthen the soul for the battles of the Lord.

If the faithful do not feel these and even more wonderful effects of faith, it is not because faith has not the strength and efficacy to produce them, but it is because some of the faithful are so forgetting and negligent, while others give themselves up so much to a carnal and bestial life and thereby counteract the blessing of faith. They think so rarely of it, that they might as well not have received it at all. As they live like the infidels who have never enjoyed its advantages and as they gradually become conscious of their unhappy infidelity, they fall into greater wickedness than the unbelievers. For such is the result of their abominable ingratitude and contempt for this exalted and sovereign gift. I ask of thee, my dearest daughter, that thou give thanks for the blessings of holy faith with profound humility and fervent love; that thou practice it with unceasing and heroic acts; that thou continually meditate on its mysteries. Thus shalt thou enjoy without hindrance its sweet and godlike effects. The more vivid and penetrating thy knowledge of the mysteries of faith, so much the greater and more powerful will be its effects upon thee. If thou concurrest with proper diligence, thou wilt grow in the understanding of the exalted and wonderful mysteries and sacraments pertaining to the essence of the triune God, to the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature, to the life, death and resurrection of my most holy Son, and to the other activities of the God-man. Thus wilt thou taste of his sweetness and gather plentiful fruits of peace and of eternal life.

CHAPTER X.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

My daughter, when the Son of the eternal Father issued forth from his bosom and assumed humanity in my womb, He came to enlighten those that walk in the darkness and in the shadow of death (Luke 1, 79), and to restore them to their lost happiness. Hence, in order to be their light, their way, their truth and their life, it was necessary that He should give them a law so holy, that it would justify them; so clear that it would enlighten them; so secure, that it would encourage them; so powerful, that it would move them; so efficacious, that it would help them; so truthful, that it would bring joy and delight to all that would observe it. The immaculate law of the Gospel has in it the power to produce all these and other more wonderful effects; and God has created and constituted rational creatures in such a way, that all their happiness, corporal and spiritual, temporal and eternal, depends entirely upon observing this law. Hence thou canst judge of the blind ignorance with which their deadly enemies have fascinated mortals (Gal. 3, 1), since all men, in the inordinate desire and pursuit of happiness, neglect the divine law, where alone it can be found; and hence few really attain happiness.

Knowing this, prepare thy heart so that the Lord may write in it his holy law. Forget and put away from thee all that is visible and earthly, so that all thy faculties may be free and unencumbered of any images except of those which are fixed there by the finger of God and

are contained in the doctrine and precepts of the gospel truths. In order that thy desires may not be frustrated beseech the Lord day and night, to make thee worthy of the blessings and promises of my most holy Son. Remember that the negligence is more abominable in thee than in all the other mortals; for no one else has his divine love so urgently called, or assisted with the like blessings and helps. In the days of abundance as well as in the days of affliction and temptation remember thy debt to the Lord and his jealous zeal, so that neither favors may exalt thee nor sufferings and pain oppress thee. If in the one as in the other state do thou turn to the divine law written in thy heart, observing it inviolably and incessantly with all attention and perfection. In regard to the love of the neighbors apply always the first law of doing unto others as thou wishest done to thyself, which is the standard of all intercourse with men. If thou desirest them to think and act well toward thee, thou thyself must do the same with thy brethren. If thou feel that they offend thee in little things, avoid thou giving them any such offense. If thou see others doing what seems evil and disagreeable to their neighbor, avoid it thyself; for thou knowest how much it offends against the law established by the Most High. Weep over thy faults and those of thy fellow-men; because they are against the law of God; this is true charity toward the Lord and toward thy neighbor. Sorrow over the afflictions of others as over thy own, for thus wilt thou imitate me.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

My daughter, many times I have reminded thee how injurious to the Almighty and how dangerous to mortals is the forgetfulness and the neglect of the mysterious and wonderful works of his divine clemency toward men. My maternal solicitude urges me to renew in thee the memory and the sorrow for this lamentable tendency. Where is the judgment and good sense of men, that they should forget their eternal welfare and the glory of their Redeemer and Creator? The gates of grace and of glory are open; and yet they not only do not enter, but they fly from light and life, and they shut them out from hearts darkened by the shadows of death. O more than inhuman cruelty of the sinner toward himself! Overtaken by the most dangerous and deathly sickness, He does not wish to accept the remedy so graciously offered to him! Who would not willingly be snatched from death and restored to life? What sick person would not be grateful to the physician for curing him of his sickness? If men know how to be thankful for the restoration of health, which is so soon to be again taken from them by death and only serves them to endure new labors and dangers, why are they so foolish and hard of heart as not to be thankful for or even recognize the blessings of Him, who gives them eternal life and happiness, who rescues them from pains without end and inconceivably great?

O my dearest daughter, how can I receive as

children and be a Mother to those who thus despise my dearest Son and Lord and all his clemency? The angels and saints of heaven understand his kindness, and they are astounded at the gross and dangerous ingratitude of mortals, and they see how the rectitude of divine judgments shall become manifest before the whole world. Already in previous parts of this history I have declared to thee many of these secrets; and now I have made known to thee still more, in order that thou mayest imitate me so much the more closely and weep with me over this unhappy state of mortals, by which God has been, and is, so greatly offended. Weep thou over their sins and at the same time try to make up for them. I wish that thou let no day pass without having given most humble thanks to his greatness; since He had instituted the great Sacraments and receives only abuse in return. Do thou receive them with profound reverence, faith and firm hope. Especially must thou be filled with highest esteem for the sacrament of Penance and try to excite in thee the dispositions and fulfill the requirements, which the holy Church and its teachers point out as necessary for its worthy reception. Approach it with an humble and thankful heart day after day; and whenever thou art conscious of any fault, do not postpone the remedy afforded by this Sacrament. Wash and cleanse thy soul; for it is the most abominable carelessness to know oneself stained with sin, and to remain in such disgrace for a long time, yea even for one instant.

Particularly do I wish thee to understand the wrath of the Almighty against those who dare to receive the Sacraments unworthily, especially the august Sacrament of the Altar. O soul! How dreadful is this sin in the eyes of the Lord and his saints! Yea, not only the

receiving of Him unworthily, but the irreverences committed in his real presence on the altar! How can they be called children of the Church, who, claiming to believe and respect this mystery, not only neglect to visit Him in the many places where He is sacramentally present, but also dare to indulge in such disrespect toward Him as even the heathens are not guilty of against their false idols? This is a matter which could not be deplored sufficiently in many discourses; and I tell thee, my daughter, that the men of the present age have so outraged the justice of the Lord, that I cannot even manifest to them, what in my kindness I desire as a remedy of this evil. But let them know at present that his sentence shall be dreadful and without mercy, rendered against those wicked and faithless servants who are condemned by the words of their own mouth (Luke 19, 22). This thou canst announce to all that will hear thee; and counsel them to come at least once a day to the churches in which their God is sacramentally present, in order to adore and worship Him; and let them assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, for men do not know how much they lose by their negligence in this regard.

CHAPTER XII.

CONTINUED PRAYER.

My daughter, one of the reasons why men should call me Mother of mercy, is the knowledge of my loving desire, that all be satiated with the flood of grace and taste the sweetness of the Lord as I myself. I call and invite all to come with me to the fountain of the Divinity. Let the most poor and afflicted approach, for if they respond and follow me, I will offer them my protection and help, and I will intercede for them with my Son and obtain for them the hidden manna, which will give to them nourishment and life (Apoc. 2, 27). Deny thyself and put off all the works of human weakness, and, by the true light, which thou hast received concerning the works of my Son and my own, contemplate and study thyself in this mirror, in order to arrive at that beauty, which the highest King seeks in thee.

Since this is the most powerful means for perfection in thy works, I wish that thou write this advice into thy heart. Whenever thou must perform any interior or exterior work, consider beforehand whether what thou art going to say or do corresponds with the doings of thy Lord, and whether thou hast the intention thereby to honor thy Lord and benefit thy neighbor. As soon as thou art sure that this is thy motive, execute thy undertaking in union with Him and in imitation of Him; but if thou findest not this motive let the undertaking rest. This was my invariable course in pursuing the imitation of my Lord and Teacher;

though in me there was no reluctance toward the good, but only the desire of imitating Him perfectly. In this imitation consists the fruit of his holy teaching, in which He urges us to do, what is most pleasing and acceptable to the eternal God. Moreover from this day on be mindful not to undertake any work, not to speak or even think any of anything, without first asking my permission and consulting with me as thy Mother and Teacher. And as soon as I answer thee give thanks to the Lord; if I do not answer after continued inquiry, I promise and assure thee on the part of the Lord, that He will, nevertheless, give thee light as to what will be according to his most perfect will. In all things, however, subject thyself to the guidance of thy spiritual director, and never forget this practice!

CHAPTER XIII.

SOLICITOUS LABOR.

My daughter, in what thou hast written of my labors, thou shouldst have received a most exalted doctrine for thy imitation and direction; but in order that thou mayest not forget I will now give thee a summary of it. I wish that thou imitate me in three virtues which thou wilt find in what thou hast written: they are the virtues of prudence, charity and justice, so little taken notice of by mortals. Prudence should teach thee to provide for the wants of thy neighbor as far as possible in thy state. Charity should make thee diligent and zealous in coming to their assistance. Justice should oblige thee to fulfill the obligations of charity, as necessity and love itself points them out to thee. Thou shouldst be an eye to the blind, an ear to the deaf, and thy hands should labor for those that are maimed (Job 39, 15). Although, on account of thy state of life, thou must practice this doctrine principally and continually in a spiritual way, yet I desire that thou take it to the heart also as far as the temporal and bodily wants of thy neighbor demand, always striving to be most faithful in imitating me. For I also provided for the necessities of my spouse, and held Myself ready to serve and support him, deeming myself obliged thereto; and I fulfilled this obligation with ardent charity until he died. Although the Lord had given him to me for my support, I faithfully provided for him by my labors as long as he was unable to perform this task himself. I

judged it to be my duty thus to use the strength given to me by the Lord and would have considered it a great fault not to do so with great assiduity.

The children of the Church pay no attention to this example and therefore they have fallen into a perverseness which greatly exasperates the just Judge. For, though all mortals, not only since the first sin by which all incurred work as a punishment, but also from the very first beginning, men were created in order to work (Gen. 2, 15), nevertheless, work is not evenly distributed among men. The powerful and the rich and those whom the world calls lords and nobles all try to exempt themselves from this common law and try to throw this burden upon the humble and the poor of human society. The rich keep up their pride and ostentation by the labor and sweat of the poor, and the powerful draw their strength from the weakness and helplessness of the lowly. In many of the proud, in their haughtiness, this perversity reaches such extremes that they begin to think all this is due to them and they despise, oppress and trod-under foot the poor (James 2, 6). They falsely suppose that others are created only in order that they themselves might enjoy leisure and delight and all the world's goods; and in addition to this, they do not even pay the small wages for these services. In this matter of not paying proper wages to the poor and to the servants and in matters of like sort thou wilt find great crimes against the order and will of the Almighty. But let it be known that just as the rich pervert justice and reason and refuse to take their share in human labor, so also will mercy be inverted for them, and be showered upon the despised and lowly (Wis. 6, 7). Those who in their pride gave themselves up to contemptible idleness, shall be chastised by the demons whom they have imitated.

Thou, dearest, take heed against such deception; let the advantages of earnest labor be always before thy eyes according to my example; separate thyself from the children of Belial, who so idly seek vain applause, and thus labor for naught. Do not deem thyself above others, because thou art a superior, but deem thyself more lowly and humble, a slave of all the rest; diligently serving them all without distinction. If necessary, be ready to labor for their sustenance and be convinced that this is incumbent upon thee not only as their superior, but also because the religious are thy sisters, daughters of the heavenly Father and creatures of the Lord thy Spouse. Since thou hast received more than all the rest at his liberal hand, thou art also obliged to labor more than they. The weak and ailing relieve of bodily labor and do their work thyself. I wish that thou not only avoid charging others with work which thou canst perform thyself and which belongs to thee, but that thou assume, as much as possible, that of all the rest, deeming thyself their inferior and their servant as I wish thee always to consider thyself. Since thou canst not do all thyself, and since it is necessary that thou distribute bodily labor among thy subjects, I exhort thee to observe good order and equity, not putting more labor upon those who are too humble or weak to object; but I wish that thou humiliate those who are of a haughty and proud spirit and are unwilling to occupy themselves in hard work. However, this must be done without exasperating them and with a gentle firmness, helping them to suppress their lukewarmness and want of subjection by placing upon them the yoke of holy obedience in accordance with their profession. In doing this thou conferrest upon them the greatest blessing and thou only fulfillest thy own obligation; therefore, thou shouldst

see to it that they understand thee in that way. All this thou wilt attain if thou make no personal distinctions and assign to each one the work which she can do, and what is appropriate to her; obliging and compelling each one with equity and justice to abhor idleness and laxity, and let them see thee engaged in the hardest and most difficult work. Thereby thou wilt gain an humble liberty of commanding them; but what thou canst do thyself, command no one, in order that thou mayest enjoy the fruit and the reward of labor in imitation of me and in obeying all that I advise and remind thee of.

CHAPTER XIV.

CARE OF THE SICK.

My daughter, one of the virtuous works most pleasing to the Lord and most fruitful for souls, is the loving care of the sick. By it is fulfilled to a great extent that natural law which requires us to do to our neighbors what we wish them to do to us. In the Gospel this is adduced as one of the works for which the Lord shall give eternal reward to the just (Matth. 25, 34); and the failure to exercise this duty is alleged as one of the causes of the eternal damnation of the wicked. In the same place the justice of this retribution is also explained; namely, as men are the children of the eternal Father, the Lord accounts any good or ill done to our neighbor as done to his own children, whose part He takes; for so it is customary among human parents. With regard to thyself thou must moreover consider that thou art the mother of thy religious and that they, just as thou thyself, are the spouses of my blessed Son. The fact that they have received of Him less blessings should so much the more oblige thee to serve and nurse them in their sickness. On this account I have on another occasion told thee that thou must consider thyself the infirmarian of all of them, as being inferior to them because of thy great obligations. I assign to thee thereby an office which is great in the house of the Lord. In order to fulfill its obligations do not charge others with the work which thou canst do thyself in the service of the sick; and whatever, on account of the

duties of thy office thou canst not compass, be thou careful in commending to the special care of those who are appointed to discharge these duties by obedience. Besides common charity, there are other reasons why the religious should be attended to in their ailments with the greatest care and solicitude; namely, in order that their afflictions and necessities may not cause them to long for return to their parental homes and to the world. Be sure, that in this way much harm enters the cloister; for human nature is so adverse to suffering, that, rather than feel the want of necessities, it will again face the greatest dangers of the soul.

In order to stir thee on toward proficiency in the exercise of this doctrine, the charity which I showed toward my spouse, Joseph, in his ailments should serve thee as a spur and encouragement. Very tardy is that charity (and even the politeness), which waits until the needy one asks for help. I did not wait, but hastened to assist before I was asked. My charity and attention anticipated the requests of my spouse and thus I consoled him not only by my services but by my loving solicitude and attention. I shared his sufferings and hardships with heartfelt compassion; but at the same time I praised the Most High and thanked Him for the blessings of affliction conferred on his servant. If sometimes I sought to relieve his pains, it was not in order to deprive him of the occasion of meriting, but that he might by this aid excite himself to glorify so much the more the Author of all goodness and holiness; and to these virtues I exhorted and encouraged him. With similar perfection shouldst thou exercise this noble virtue, providing for the needs of the sick and weak, comforting them by thy compassion and words of advice, doing them all kinds of good service, without wishing

them to lose the reward of suffering. Let not thy carnal love disturb thee when thy sisters fall sick, although they be those thou lovest or needest most; for thereby many souls, both in the world and in religion, lose the merit of their labors. The sorrow occasioned by the sight of sickness or danger in their friends, disturbs their equanimity and under the pretense of compassion, they begin to complain and refuse to submit themselves to the dispositions of divine Providence. In all these things I have given thee an example and I demand of thee to imitate it perfectly by following my footsteps.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ATTACKS OF THE DEMON.

My dearest daughter, it was not without special reason that thy heart was moved to great compassion and pity toward those who are at the point of death and that thou art inspired with a desire to help them in that hour; for it is true, as thou hast perceived, that then the souls of men incur the most incredible and dangerous attacks from the demons, as well as from their own frailty and from the creatures around them. That hour is the great trial of life, upon which depends the last sentence of eternal death or eternal life, of eternal suffering or eternal glory. As the Most High has condescendingly vouchsafed to fill thee with these sentiments, I exhort thee to exert all thy powers and faculties to act accordingly. Remember, then, my friend, that when Lucifer and his satellites of darkness perceive, by the course of natural events, that any one falls a prey to a dangerous and mortal disease, they immediately prepare to assail the poor and unbewaring soul with all their malice and astuteness in order to vanquish them if possible by various temptations. Whenever they see an opening for attacking the souls, they try to supply in fury and malice the shortness of time.

At such times they gather like blood-thirsty wolves and search out the natural and acquired failings in his nature, taking into account his inclinations, habits and customs, and where his passions cause him greater weakness, in order to direct toward this part the

strongest battery and engines of war. Those that have a disorderly love of earthly life, they persuade that there is not such great danger and they prevent others from undeceiving them. Those that have been negligent in the reception of the Sacraments, they try to make still more careless and they place obstacles and difficulties in the way in order that they may die without them, or in order that they may receive them without fruit and with a bad disposition. Others they fill with false suggestions and shame in order that they may not confess their sins and open their conscience. Others they confuse and try to prevent from making proper restitution and thus unburdening their consciences. Others, who love vanity, they entangle, even at that last hour, in many vain and proud desires with regard to what is to be done for them after death. Those that have been avaricious or sensual, they seek to excite violently toward what they loved so blindly during life. In short, of all the bad habits and customs this cruel enemy avails himself in order to fill their minds with images of creatures and draw them away from their salvation or make them incapable of it. All the sinful actions and vicious habits of their previous life have become, as it were, pledges in the hands of the common enemy for the possession of the sinner and weapons for assault and battery in this tremendous hour of death. Every appetite, which has been inordinately indulged, is an avenue or bypath by which he enters into the citadel of the soul. Once in, he breathes forth his pestilential fumes, and raises the clouds of darkness, his proper work, so that the soul may not give heed to the divine inspirations, have no true sorrow for its sins, and do no penance for its wicked life.

Generally these enemies cause a great damage

to the souls in that hour by exciting the vain hope of a longer life and being able to execute later on what God suggests to them by means of the holy angels. Giving way to this deceit, they find themselves afterwards betrayed and lost. Just as great is the danger of those who have shown little esteem for the saving graces of the Sacraments: for this contempt is very offensive to the Lord and to the saints, and divine justice is wont to punish it by leaving these souls to their own wicked counsels. This leads them to great neglect in profiting by this help. Thus they are themselves forsaken by the Lord in their last hour, in which they expected to provide for their salvation. There are few among the just whom this ancient serpent does not furiously attack in their last agony. And if satan boasts of having ruined even saints at such times, what hope have the wicked, the negligent and sinful, who have spent their whole lives in making themselves unworthy of divine favor and grace, and who are devoid of meritorious works to offset the assaults of their enemies? My holy Spouse, saint Joseph, was one of those who enjoyed the privilege of neither seeing nor feeling the presence of the demon in his last hour; for as soon as they approached to deal with him as they do with the rest of men, they felt a powerful force, which kept them at a distance and the holy angels hurled them back into their abyss. Seeing themselves thus oppressed and crushed, they were seized with great uneasiness and confusion. Almost stupefied, Lucifer called a meeting of his followers in hell, in order to consult about this surprising event and in order to have them once more search the earth for the Messias; and then happened what thou shalt relate later on in its place.

Hence thou wilt understand the great danger in

the hour of death, when both the good works and the bad will begin to show their effects. I will not tell thee how many are thus lost, in order that thy sincere love of God may not cause thee to die of sorrow at this loss. But the general rule is: a good life gives hope of a good end; all other reliance is doubtful, and salvation resting upon it is very rare and merely accidental. The best precaution is to take a good start from afar; and therefore I admonish thee, that, at the dawning of each day, when thou lookest upon the light, thou seriously consider whether it may not be the last of thy life, and, if it should be the last (for thou dost not know), that thou place thy soul in such a state as to be able to meet death with a smiling face. Do not delay even for one instant sorrow for thy sins and a firm purpose of confessing them as soon as thou findest thyself guilty of any and of amending the least of thy imperfections. In all this be so careful that thou leave not upon thy conscience the smallest defect without being sorry for it and without cleansing thyself by the blood of my most holy Son. Place thyself in such a condition that thou art ready to appear before the just Judge, who is to examine and judge thy least thoughts and all thy movements.

In order that according to thy pious wishes, thou mayest help those who are in danger of death, thou shouldst give to others the same counsels that I have now given thee. Exhort them to lead a careful life in order to secure a happy death. Moreover, say some prayers for this intention every day of thy life, fervently asking the Almighty to disperse the deceits of the devils, to destroy the snares prepared against those who are in the throes of death, and that his right hand confound all the demons. Know that I have directed my prayers

to that end for mortals and in this I wish thee to imitate me. That thou mayest help them so much the more, I wish thee to order and command the demons to depart from the sick and stop their persecutions; and thou canst very efficaciously use this power, even when thou art absent from the sick, for thou art to command them in the name of the Lord, and thou art to compel them to obey thee for his greater honor and glory.

When thy own religious are in danger of death do thou, without exciting them, instruct them in what they are to do. Admonish them and help them to receive the holy Sacraments, and see that they receive them frequently during life in preparation for a good end. Seek to encourage and console them, speaking to them of the things of God and his mysteries contained in the holy Scriptures. Exhort them to awaken their good intentions and desires and to prepare themselves to receive the light and the graces of the Most High. Excite them to hope, strengthen them against temptations and teach them how they are to resist and overcome them, seeking to divine them before they themselves manifest them to thee. The Almighty will give thee an understanding of them so that thou mayest apply the right medicine to each; for the infirmities of the soul are hard to diagnose and cure. All that I now tell thee thou must execute as the most beloved daughter of the Lord and in his service, and I will procure for thee certain privileges for thyself and for those thou desirest to aid in that terrible hour. Do not stint thy charity in these works for thou shalt work not by thy own strength alone, but by the power which God wishes to exercise in thee for his own glory.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH.

My daughter, although thou hast described my spouse, saint Joseph, as the most noble among the princes and saints of the heavenly Jerusalem; yet neither canst thou properly manifest his eminent sanctity, nor can any of the mortals know it fully before they arrive at the vision of the Divinity. Then all of them will be filled with wonder and praise as the Lord will make them capable of understanding this sacrament. On the last day, when all men shall be judged, the damned will bitterly bewail their sins, which prevented them from appreciating this powerful means of their salvation, and availing themselves, as they easily could have, of this intercessor to gain the friendship of the just Judge. The whole human race has much undervalued the privileges and prerogatives conceded to my blessed spouse and they know not what his intercession with God is able to do. I assure thee, my dearest, that he is one of the greatly favored personages in the divine presence and has immense power to stay the arms of divine vengeance.

I desire that thou be very thankful to the divine condescension for vouchsafing thee so much light and knowledge regarding this mystery, and also for the favor which I am doing thee therein. From now on, during the rest of thy mortal life, see that thou advance in devotion and in hearty love toward my spouse, and that thou bless the Lord for thus having favored him with such high privileges and for having rejoiced me so

much in the knowledge of all his excellences. In all thy necessities thou must avail thyself of his intercession. Thou shouldst induce many to venerate him and see that thy own religious distinguish themselves in their devotion to him. That which my spouse asks of the Lord in heaven is granted upon the earth and on his intercession depend many and extraordinary favors for men, if they do not make themselves unworthy of receiving them. All these privileges were to be a reward for the amiable perfection of this wonderful saint and for his great virtues; for divine clemency is favorably drawn forth by them and looks upon saint Joseph with generous liberality, ready to shower down its marvelous mercies upon all those who avail themselves of his intercession.

CHAPTER XVII.

OBEDIENCE.

My daughter, I wish that, before proceeding to narrate other mysteries, thou understand well all that the Lord commanded in regard to my intercourse with my holy spouse, saint Joseph. When I espoused myself to him, God commanded me to change the order of my meals and other exterior duties in order to accommodate myself to his circumstances; for he was the head of the family, and, according to the common rule, I was the inferior. The same conduct was also followed by my most holy Son, though He was true God, yet He subjected Himself before the eyes of the world to him who was thought to be his father. As soon as We were alone after the death of my spouse, who was the occasion of this change in our lives, we returned to our former way of living. The Lord did not expect saint Joseph to accommodate himself to us, but that We should accommodate ourselves to him as the common order among men required. Nor did the Lord resort to miracles in order to escape the necessity of taking food or of following ordinary human occupations; for in all things, He acted as the Teacher of all virtues, and of all perfection, being an example to parents and children, to prelates, superiors and superioresses, to subjects and inferiors; to parents, in order that they may learn to love their children, help them, nourish them, exhort them, correct them and lead them on in the way of salvation without remissness or carelessness; to chil-

dren, in order that they may learn to esteem, love and honor their parents as the instruments of their existence, diligently obey them according to the natural law, which requires and teaches obedience and repudiates the opposite as monstrous and horrible; to prelates and superiors, in order that they may love their subjects and direct them as their children; to inferiors, that they obey without resistance, even if they should in other respects be of higher and better condition in life; for in so far as the superior represents God, the prelate is always superior in dignity; but real charity must always teach both to be of one spirit.

In order that thou mayest acquire this great virtue, I desire that thou conform and accommodate thyself to thy sisters and inferiors without affection of formality, and that thou treat them with dove-like meekness and sincerity. Do thou pray when they pray, work and eat, and take thy recreation with them. For real perfection in a convent consists in conforming with the common spirit, and if thou act thus, thou wilt be guided by the holy Spirit, who governs all well-regulated communities. Following this order thou canst make progress in abstinence, eating less than the others, though the same amount of food is placed before thee. Without being singular thou canst, with a little discretion, abstain from what thou desirest for the love of thy Spouse and of me. If thou art not hindered by some grave infirmity, never absent thyself from the common exercises unless perhaps obedience to thy superiors sometimes prevent thee. Be present at all common exercises with special reverence, attention and devotion, for at such times thou wilt most frequently be visited by the Lord.

I wish also that thou learn from this chapter to conceal carefully the special works thou undertakest

in imitation of my own; for, although I had no need of refraining from any work in the presence of saint Joseph, yet I was careful to add retirement as an additional observance of perfection and prudence, since retirement of itself makes good works more praiseworthy. But this is not to be understood of ordinary and obligatory works, since thou must give a good example and let thy light shine, avoiding any danger of scandal or cause for cavil. There are many works which can be done in secret and unobserved by the eyes of creatures, and which are not lightly to be exposed to the danger of publicity and ostentation. In thy retirement thou canst make many genuflections; prostrate in the dust, thou canst humiliate thyself, adoring the supreme Majesty of the Most High and offering thy mortal body, which oppresses thy soul, as a sacrifice for the disorderly inclinations against justice and reason. Thus thou wilt not reserve any part of thy being from the service of thy Creator and Spouse, and thou wilt force thy body to make up the loss which it causes to the soul by its passions and earthly affections.

With this object in view seek to keep it always in strict subjection, allowing it to partake only of those comforts which serve to keep it in proper condition for the activity of the soul and not to pander to its passions and appetites. Mortify and crush it until it is dead to all that is delightful to the senses, so that even the common actions necessary for life shall appear to thee more painful than agreeable, taste more of bitterness than of dangerous enjoyment. Although I have already on other occasions spoken to thee of the value of this mortification and humiliation, thou shouldst now, by this example which I have given thee, be still more convinced of their great value. I now command thee not to despise

any of these acts or deem them of little consequence, but esteem all of them as precious treasures to be gained for thyself. In this thou must be covetous and avaricious, eagerly grasping the occasions of doing servile work, such as scrubbing, cleaning the house, engaging in the most menial services, and attending upon the sick and infirm as I have said before. In all of these works place me before thy eyes as an example in order that my carefulness and humility may urge thee on, full of joy to be able to imitate me, and shame for any negligence therein. If I, who never had displeased or offended the Lord since the beginning of my existence, judged this virtue of humility so necessary in order to find grace in his eyes and be raised up by his right hand, how much more is it necessary for thee to humble thyself to the dust and annihilate thyself in his sight, who wast conceived in sin and hast so often offended Him? (Ps. 50, 7). Humiliate thyself to nothingness, and acknowledge that what being the Most High has given thee, thou hast but ill employed, and that, therefore, thy very existence should be a subject of humiliation to thee. Thus wilt thou at last find the treasure of grace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONTINUED FAVORS OF GOD.

My daughter, it is certain, that even if thou or any of the mortals were able to speak in the language of the angels, they would not on that account be able to describe the blessings and favors, which the right hand of the Most High showered upon me in those last years of the life of my Son with me. These works of the Lord are of an order, far above thy capacity and that of the rest of the mortals. But since thou hast received such special enlightenment concerning these sacraments, I wish that thou praise and extol the Almighty for all that He did for me and for raising me out of the dust by such exalted favors. Although the love of the Lord must be spontaneous as that of a devoted daughter and of a most loving spouse, not selfish or forced; yet I wish, that, for the support of thy human weakness and the strengthening of thy hope, thou fondly remember, how delightful the Lord is in his charity toward those who love Him with filial fear. O my dearest Daughter, if men would place no hindrance by their sins, and if they would not resist this infinite bounty, how measureless would be the favors and blessings upon them! According to thy way of understanding thou must look upon Him as being outraged and made sorrowful by the opposition of mortals to his boundless desires of doing them good. And they carry their opposition so far, that they accustom themselves not only to be unworthy of tasting of his sweetness, but also not to believe, that others ever participate in his

sweetness and blessings, which He desires so much to communicate to all.

Be careful also to give thanks for the incessant labors of my most holy Son for all men, and for what I have done in union with Him, as has been shown thee. Catholics should bear in mind more constantly the passion and death of the Lord, because the Church so often recalls it to their remembrance, although few show themselves grateful. But there are still fewer who take thought of the other works of my Son and of mine. For the Lord allowed not one hour, yea not a moment, to pass, in which He did not employ in gaining gifts and graces for rescuing all men from eternal damnation and making them participants of his glory. These works of the Lord God incarnate will be witnesses against the forgetfulness and hard-heartedness of the faithful, especially on the day of judgment. If thou, who possessest the light and the doctrine of the Most High and my teachings, wilt not be grateful, thy confusion will be even greater than that of others, since thy guilt is more heinous. Thou must not only correspond to the many general blessings, but also to the special and particular ones, which thou experiencest every day. Guard against the danger of forgetfulness and conduct thyself as my daughter and disciple. Do not delay for one moment to apply thyself to a good life in the best way possible to thee. For this purpose attend well to the interior lights and to the instructions of thy spiritual guides, the ministers of the Lord. Be assured, if thou correspond to some of the graces and favors, the Most High will open up his almighty hands and fill thee with riches and treasures.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SMALL NUMBER OF MEN SAVED.

My daughter, I see thee astonished at the information, which I give thee concerning the mysterious works of my most holy Son and concerning my own share in them. For thou seest on the one hand, how powerful they are for making an impression on human hearts, and on the other, that many of them have remained hidden until now. Thy wonder should not be that men have not known these mysteries, but that, having been informed of so many others concerning the life and activity of their own and my Lord, they have held them in such contempt and forgetfulness. If they were not so ignoble of heart, and would lovingly contemplate the divine truths, they would find in my Son's and in my own life, as far as it is known to them, most powerful motives for thankfulness. By the articles of faith and by the many other truths taught and preached in the holy Church, many worlds could be converted. For these truths exhibit clearly, that the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father clothed Himself in the mortal flesh of sinful man in order to redeem the human race by the frightful death of the Cross (Philip 2, 7), acquiring for them eternal life by the loss of his own, and recalling and liberating them from everlasting death. If this blessing were taken at its true value and mortals were not so ungrateful to their God and Savior and so cruel toward themselves, none would lose their chance of salvation or bring upon themselves eternal damnation. In thy amazement then, my dearest, weep cease-

lessly over the terrible loss sustained by so many insane and thankless souls, who are forgetful of God, of their duty and of their own selves.

On former occasions I have already told thee, that the number of those foreknown as doomed, is so great, and of those that save themselves is so small, that it is not expedient to say more in particular. For if thou hast the sentiments of a true daughter of the Church, the spouse of Christ, my Son and Lord, thou wouldst die at seeing such misfortune. What thou mayest know, is, that all the loss and misfortune apparent in Christian nations and governments, as well among chiefs as among subjects of the Church and of the secular state, all originate and flow from the forgetfulness and contempt of the works of Christ and of the works of his Redemption. If there were a way of rousing them to a sense of thankfulness and to a sense of their duty as faithful and acknowledged children of their Creator and Redeemer, and of me, who am their Intercessor, the wrath of the divine Judge would be appeased, and there would be some diminution of the widespread ruin and perdition among Catholics. The eternal Father, who is justly zealous for the honor of his Son and rigorously chastises the servants, who know the will of their Lord and refuse to fulfill it, would again be reconciled.

The faithful in the Church make much of the sin of the infidel Jews in taking away the life of their God and Master. They are right in doing so, for it was a most heinous crime and merited the punishments decreed against that people. But Catholics forget, that their own sins are rendered heinous by other elements of guilt surpassing that of the Jews; for although their error was culpable, they esteemed it as truth in the end; then also the Lord delivered Himself up to them, allowing them to fol-

low the counsels of hell, by which they were oppressed for their sins (Luke 22, 53). In our days the Catholics are not in ignorance, but in the fullness of the light, by which they know and understand the divine mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. The holy Church has been founded, spread out, made illustrious by miracles, by saints, by holy writings, by the knowledge and proclamation of truths unknown to the Jews. In spite of all these multiplied advantages, blessings, truths and enlightenments, many live like infidels and as if they had not before their eyes so many inducements to draw them on and oblige them, nor so many chastisements to fill them with dread. How can Catholics then, under these circumstances, imagine that the sins of others were greater or more grievous than their own? How can they presume that their punishment shall not be more lamentable? O my daughter, ponder well this doctrine, and be filled with a holy fear! Humiliate thyself to the dust and confess thyself the lowest of the creatures before the Most High. Look upon the works of thy Redeemer and Master. Imitate them and apply them sorrowfully to satisfy for thy own faults in sorrow and penance. Do thou imitate and follow me in my ways, as far as thou art enlightened from on high. And I wish that thou labor not only for thy own salvation, but also for the salvation of thy brethren. This thou must do by praying and suffering for them, charitably admonishing those thou canst, and eagerly doing for them more than is thy duty. Show thyself even more anxious to benefit those who have offended thee, be patient with all, and humiliate thyself below the most abject. According to the directions given thee before, be thou solicitous to assist, with fervent charity and firm assurance, those that are in the dangers of death.

CHAPTER XX.

ETERNAL LOSS.

My daughter, weep with bitterest sorrow over the stubbornness and blindness of mortals in not understanding and acknowledging the loving protection, which they have in my divine Son and in me as a relief from all their troubles and necessities. My Lord spared Himself no exertion and left no means unemployed in order to gain for them inestimable treasures of heaven. He garnered up his infinite merits in the holy Church, the most important fruit of his Passion and Death; He left the secure pledges of his glorious love; and procured for them most easy and efficacious means in order that all of them might enjoy and apply them for their use and for their eternal salvation. He offers them moreover his protection and mine; He loves them as children; He cherishes them as his chosen friends; He calls them by his inspirations; He invites them by his blessings and graces; He awaits them as a most kind Father; He seeks them as their Pastor; He helps them as the most Powerful; He rewards them as One possessing infinite riches, and governs them as a mighty King. All these and innumerable other favors, which are pointed out by faith, offered by the Church and presented before their very eyes, men forget and despise; as if blind, they love the darkness and deliver themselves up to the fury and rage of those cruel enemies. They listen to his lies, obey his wicked suggestions and confide in his snares; they trust and give themselves up to the unquenchable fire of his wrath. He

seeks to destroy them and consign them to eternal death, only because they are creatures of the Most High, who vanquished and crushed this most cruel foe.

Guard thyself, therefore, my dearest, against this deplorable error of the children of men and disengage thy faculties in order that thou mayest clearly see the difference between the service of Christ and that of Belial. Greater is that difference than the distance between heaven and earth. Christ is eternal life, the true light and the pathway to eternal life; those who follow Him He loves with imperishable love, and He offers them his life and his company; with it, an eternal happiness, such as neither eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor ever can enter into the mind of man (John 14, 6). Lucifer is darkness itself, error, deceit, unhappiness and death; he hates his followers and forces them into evil as far as possible, and at the end inflicts upon them eternal fire and horrid torments. Let mortals give testimony, whether they are ignorant of these truths, since the holy Church propounds them and calls them to their minds every day. If men believe these truths, where is their good sense? Who has made them insane? Who drives from their remembrance the love, which they ought to have for themselves? Who makes them so cruel to themselves? O insanity never sufficiently to be bewailed and so little considered by the children of Adam! All their life they labor and exert themselves to become more and more entangled in the snares of their passions, to be consumed in deceitful vanities and to deliver themselves over to an extinguishable fire, death and everlasting perdition, as if all were a mere joke and as if Christ had not come down from heaven to die on a Cross for their rescue! Let them but look upon the price, and consider how much God him-

self paid for this happiness, who knew the full value of it.

The idolaters and heathens are much less to blame for falling into this error; nor does the wrath of the Most High enkindle so much against them as against the faithful of his Church, who have such a clear knowledge of this truth. If the minds of men, in our present age, have grown forgetful of it, let them understand that this happened by their own fault, because they have given a free hand to their enemy Lucifer. He with tireless malice labors to overthrow the barriers of restraint, so that, forgetful of the last things and of eternal torment, men may give themselves over, like brute beasts, to sensual pleasures, and unmindful of themselves consume their lives in the pursuit of apparent good, until, as Job says (Job 21, 13), they suddenly fall a prey to eternal perdition. Such is in reality the fate of innumerable foolish men, who abhor the restraint imposed upon them by this truth. Do thou, my daughter, allow me to instruct thee, and keep thyself free from such harmful deceit and from this forgetfulness of the worldly people. Let the despairing groans of the damned, which begin at the end of their lives and at the beginning of their eternal damnation, ever resound in thy ears: O we fools, who esteemed the life of the just as madness! O how are they counted among the sons of God, and their lot is among the saints! We have erred then from the path of truth and of justice. The sun has not arisen for us. We have wearied ourselves in the ways of iniquity and destruction, we have sought difficult paths and erred by our own fault from the way of the Lord. What has pride profited us? What advantage has the boasting of riches brought us? All has passed away from us like a shadow. O had we but never been born! This, my daughter, thou must fear and pon-

der in thy heart, so that, before thou goest to that land of darkness and of eternal dungeons from whence there is no return, thou mayest provide against evil and avoid it by doing the good. During thy mortal life and out of love do thou now perform that of which the damned in their despair are forced to warn thee by the excess of their punishment.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HOLY CROSS.

My daughter, gladly will I satisfy thy desire and answer thy doubt. What thou sayest is true: the Cross was ignominious before my Son and Lord honored and sanctified it by his Passion and Death and solely on account of this Passion and Death the adoration and reverence shown to it by the Church is now due to it. If any one, who was ignorant of the mysteries, which were connected with it and which were so well known to me and saint John, would have given it such worship and honor as I have before the Redemption, he would have been guilty of error and idolatry; for he would have worshipped a creature of which he did not know that it was worthy of such honor. But we showed this veneration to the Cross for several reasons: We knew for certain, that the Redeemer was to accomplish his work upon the Cross; we knew also that, before dying upon it, He had begun to sanctify this sacred emblem by his contact in placing Himself upon it during his prayers and in offering Himself freely to die upon it. The eternal Father moreover had accepted these foreseen works of the Cross from his divine Son by an unalterable decree. All the actions and the contacts of the incarnate Word were of infinite value and thus sanctified the sacred wood, making it worthy of the highest veneration. Whenever I or saint John showed this reverence to the Cross, we had before our minds these mysteries and truths: we did not adore the Cross in itself, nor the material of which

it was made; for the divine worship was not due to it until the works of the Redemption should have been completed upon it; but we waited for the formal execution of the work intended to be performed upon it by the incarnate Word. This was the real object of our reverence and worship of the Cross. And this is also now the meaning and intent of the practice of the adoration of the Cross in the holy Church.

Accordingly thou must ponder well thy obligation and that of all the mortals in regard to the reverence and esteem due to the holy Cross; for if I and the holy Precursor, even before the Death of my divine Son upon it, so eagerly imitated Him in his love and reverence of it and in the exercises which He performed in connection therewith, what should not the faithful children of the Church do after they have seen their Creator and their Redeemer crucified upon it, and when they have the image of the Crucified before their very eyes? I desire, then, my daughter, that thou embrace the Cross with boundless esteem, that thou use it as the priceless jewel of thy Spouse, and that thou accustom thyself to perform those exercises upon it, which are known and practiced by thee, without ever of thy own will forgetting or neglecting them as long as obedience will permit thee. Whenever thou approachest such sacred exercises, let it be with a profound reverence and with a deep pondering of the Passion and Death of the Lord, thy Beloved. Try to introduce the same custom among thy religious, zealously exhorting them thereto; for no exercise is more proper to the spouses of Christ, and if performed with devotion and reverence, it will be most pleasing to their Lord. In addition to this, I wish that thou, in imitation of saint John the Baptist prepare thy heart for all that the holy Spirit wishes to work in thee for his own glory and for

the benefit of souls. As far as depends upon thee, love solitude and withdraw thy soul from the confusion of created things. Whenever thy duty to God forces thee to deal with creatures, seek always thy own sanctification and the edification of thy neighbor, so that in thy outward conversation and intercourse the zeal of thy spirit may shine forth. His exalted virtues now known to thee and those resplendent in the lives of other saints, should serve thee as a spur and as an example: seek, like a busy bee, to build up the sweet honeycomb of sanctity and innocence so much desired in thee by my divine Son. Distinguish well between the labors of the bee and of the spider: the one converts her nourishment into sweetness useful for the living and the dead, while the other changes it into snare and venom. Do thou gather the flowers of virtue from the saints in the garden of the Church, as far as thy weak endeavors with the aid of grace will permit; imitate them eagerly and incite others by thy eloquence, thus drawing blessings upon the living and the dead while thou anxiously flyest from the harm and damage of sinful deeds.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VALUE OF LABOR AND SUFFERING.

My daughter, I wish that thou ponder and penetrate more and more this mystery of which thou hast written, so fixing it in thy soul, that thou wilt be drawn to imitate my example at least in some part of it. Consider then, that in the vision of the Divinity which I had on this occasion, I was made to comprehend the high value which the Lord sets upon the labors, the Passion and Death of my Son, and upon all those who were to imitate and follow Jesus in the way of the Cross. Knowing this, I not only offered to deliver my Son over to Passion and Death, but I asked Him to make me his companion and partaker of all his sorrows, sufferings and torments, which request the eternal Father granted. Then, in order to begin following in the footsteps of his bitterness, I besought my Son and Lord to deprive me of interior delights; and this petition was inspired in me by the Lord himself, because He wished it so, and because my own love taught me and urged me thereto. This desire for suffering and the wishes of my divine Son led me on in the way of suffering. He himself, because He loved me so tenderly, granted me my desires; for those whom He loves, He chastises and afflicts (Prov. 3, 12). I as his Mother was not to be deprived of this blessed distinction of being entirely like unto Him, which alone makes this life most estimable. Immediately this will of the Most High, this my earnest petition, began to be fulfilled: I began to feel the want of his delightful caresses and He began to treat me with greater reserve. That

was one of the reasons, why He did not call me Mother, but Woman, at the marriage-feast at Cana and at the foot of the Cross (John 2, 4, 19, 26) ; and also on other occasions, when He abstained from words of tenderness. So far was this from being a sign of a diminution of his love, that it was rather an exquisite refinement of his affection to assimilate me to Him in the sufferings which He chose for Himself as his precious treasure and inheritance.

Hence thou wilt understand the ignorance and error of mortals, and how far they drift from the way of light, when, as a rule, nearly all of them strive to avoid labor and suffering and are frightened by the royal and secure road of mortification and the Cross. Full of this deceitful ignorance, they do not only abhor resemblance to Christ's suffering and my own, and deprive themselves of the true and highest blessing of this life; but they make their recovery impossible, since all of them are weak and afflicted by many sins, for which the only remedy is suffering. Sin is committed by base indulgence and is repugnant to suffering sorrow, while tribulation earns the pardon of the just judge. By the bitterness of sorrow and affliction the vapors of sin are allayed; the excesses of the concupiscible and irascible passions are crushed; pride and haughtiness are humiliated; the flesh is subdued; the inclination to evil, to the sensible and earthly creatures, is repressed; the judgment is cleared; the will is brought within bounds and its desultory movements at the call of the passions, are corrected; and, above all, divine love and pity are drawn down upon the afflicted, who embrace suffering with patience, or who seek it to imitate my most holy Son. In this science of suffering are renewed all the blessed riches of the creatures; those that fly from them are insane, those that know nothing of this science are foolish.

Exert thyself, then, my dearest daughter, to advance in this knowledge, welcome labors and suffering, and give up ever desiring human consolations. Remember also that in the spiritual consolations the demon conceals his pitfalls for thy ruin and destruction, for thou shouldst know his continual attempts to ruin the spiritually inclined. The pleasures of contemplating and looking upon the Lord, and his caresses great or small, are so enticing, that delight and consolation overflow in the faculties of the mind and cause some souls to accustom themselves to the sensible pleasures of this intercourse. In consequence thereof they make themselves unfit for other duties belonging to reasonable life of human creatures; and when it is necessary to attend to them they are annoyed, lose their interior peace and control, become morose, intractable, full of impatience toward their neighbors, forgetting all humility and charity. When they then perceive their own restlessness and its consequences, they blame all to their exterior occupations, in which the Lord has placed them for the exercise of their obedience and charity, failing to see or acknowledge that all their troubles arise from their want of mortification and subjection to providence and from their attachment to their own selfish inclinations. The demon tries to beguile them by mere desires for quiet and solitude and the secret communications of the Lord in solitude; for they imagine, that in retirement all is good and holy, and that all their trouble arises from inability to follow their pious desires in solitude.

In these very faults thou hast fallen sometimes, and from now on I wish that thou guard against them especially. For all things there is a time, as the Wise man says (Eccles. 3, 5), both for enjoying delightful embraces and for abstaining therefrom. To seek to pre-

scribe to the Lord a time for his intimate embraces is the error of souls only beginning imperfectly to serve the Lord and to strive after virtue; and similar is the fault of feeling too deeply the want of these consolations. I do not tell thee therefore purposely to seek distraction and exterior occupations, nor to find thy pleasure in them, for this is nothing short of dangerous; but to obey with peace of mind whenever thy superiors command, and willingly to leave the delights of the Lord in order to find Him again in useful labor and in the service of thy neighbor. This thou must prefer to retirement and to private consolations, and on this account thou must not love them too much; for in the anxious cares of a superior thou must learn to believe, hope and love so much the more deeply. In this manner thou must find thy Lord at all times, in all places and occupations, as thou hast already experienced. I desire that thou never consider thyself deprived of his sweetest vision and presence, or of his most loving intercourse, or that thou doubt with pusillanimity, whether thou canst find and enjoy God outside of thy retirement. All creation is full of his glory (Eccli. 42, 16), and there is no void, and thou livest and movest and hast thy being in God (17, 28). Enjoy thou thy solitude whenever He does not oblige thee to these exterior occupations.

All this thou wilt still more fully understand in the nobility of the love, which I require of thee for the imitation of my Son and of me. With Him thou must rejoice sometimes in his youth; sometimes accompany Him in his labors for the salvation of men; sometimes retire with Him to solitude; sometimes be transfigured with Him to a new creature; sometimes embrace with Him tribulations and the cross, following up the divine lessons which He taught thereby; in short, I wish thee

to understand well, that in me there was a continual desire to imitate, or an actual imitation, of all that was most perfect in his works. In this consisted my greatest perfection and holiness, and therein I wish thee to follow me, so far as thy weak strength, assisted by grace, will allow. For this purpose thou must first die to all the inclinations of a daughter of Adam, without reserving in thee any choice of desires, any self-constituted judgment as to admitting or rejecting the good; for thou knowest not what is befitting, and thy Lord and Spouse, who knows it and who loves thee more than thou dost thyself, will decide all this for thee, if thou resignest thyself entirely to his will. He gives thee a free hand only in regard to thy love of Him and in thy desire to suffer for Him, while in all the rest thy desires will only make thee drift away from his will and mine. This will surely be the result of following thy own will and inclinations, desires and appetites. Deny and sacrifice them all, raising thyself above thyself, up to the high and exalted habitation of the Lord and Master; attend to his interior lights and to the truth of his words of eternal life (John 6, 69), and in order that thou mayest follow them, take up the Cross (Matth. 14, 24), tread in his footsteps, walk in the odor of his ointments (Cant. 1, 3), and be anxious to reach thy Lord; and having obtained possession of Him, do not leave Him (Cant. 3, 4).

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WISDOM OF THE FLESH.

My dearest daughter, the wisdom of the flesh has made men ignorant, foolish and hostile to God, because it is of the devil, deceitful, earthly and rebellious to the divine laws (Rom. 8, 7). The more the children of Adam study and exert themselves to reach the evil objects of their carnal and animal passions, and to attain the means of indulging them, so much the more will they fall into ignorance of divine things, by which alone they can come to their true ultimate end. This ignorance and worldly prudence is still more abominable and still more hateful in the eyes of God, when it occurs in the children of the Church. By what right can the children of this world call themselves sons of God, brethren of Christ and inheritors of his possessions? The adopted son must be, in all that is possible, like unto the natural son. A brother is not of different blood or position from that of his brother. One is not called an heir merely because he is in some way concerned with the possessions of his father, but because he has the full enjoyment and comes into the possession of the principal property of the testator. How then are those heirs of Christ, who love, desire and seek only earthly goods and are perfectly satisfied with them? How can those be his brothers, who so widely depart from his position, his teachings and his holy rule of life? How can they be similar to Him and claim to be his image and likeness, when they so often destroy in themselves all likeness of Him and

allow themselves to be so often sealed with the image of the infernal beast? (Apoc. 16, 2).

By divine light thou knowest, my daughter, these truths, and how much I exerted myself to make myself the image of the Most High, namely, my Son and Lord. Do not think, that I have given thee such deep insight into my works without some purpose; for it is my wish that this remain written in thy heart and be forever before thy eyes, serving thee as a rule for all thy conduct during the remainder of thy life, which cannot be of very long duration now. Do not allow thyself to be retarded and snared away from my following by intercourse with creatures; let them alone, avoid them, despise them in so far as they can hinder thee on thy way. In order that thou mayest advance in my school, I wish to see thee poor, humble, despised, abased yet always with a cheerful heart and countenance. Do not try to repay thyself with the applause or the love of any creature, nor allow human sentiment to rule thee; for the Most High has not destined thee for such useless entanglements, or for occupations so lowly and adverse to the religious state to which He has called thee. Think attentively and humbly of the tokens of his love received at his hands; and of the treasures of his grace, which He has showered upon thee. Neither Lucifer nor any of his ministers and followers are ignorant of them: they are filled with wrath against thee and in their cunning they will let no stone unturned for thy destruction. His greatest efforts will be directed against thy interior, where he has planted his battery of cunning and deceit. Do thou live well prepared and watchful against all his attacks, close the portals of thy senses and preserve the authority of thy will, without allowing it to be spent on human undertakings no matter how good and upright

they may appear to thee: for if in the least point thou curtail the love which God requires of thee, this very point will be seized upon by thy enemies as a portal of entrance. All the kingdom of God is within thee (Luke 17, 21), keep it there, and there wilt thou find it, and in it all the good thou desirest. Forget not my teachings and discipline, lock it up in thy bosom and remember how great is the danger and damage from which I thereby wish to preserve thee. That thou art called to imitate and follow me, is the greatest blessing, which thou canst ever desire. I am ready in my extreme clemency to grant thee this blessing, if thou dispose thyself to high resolves, holy words and perfect works, which alone can raise thee to the state which the Almighty and I desire thee to attain.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BAPTISM.

My daughter, since in recounting to thee the works of my most holy Son I so often remind thee how thankfully I appreciated them, thou canst understand how pleasing to the Most High is the faithful correspondence on thy part, and the great mysteries of his blessings connected with it. Thou art poor in the house of the Lord, a sinner, insignificant and useless as dust; yet I ask thee to assume the duty of rendering ceaseless thanks for all that the incarnate Word has done for the sons of Adam and for establishing the holy and immaculate, the powerful and perfect law for their salvation. Especially shouldst thou be thankful for the institution of Baptism by which he frees men from the tyranny of the devil, fills them with grace, clothes them with justice and assists them to sin no more. This is indeed a duty incumbent upon all men in common; but since creatures neglect it almost entirely, I enjoin thee to give thanks for all of them, as if thou alone wert responsible for them. Thou art bound to the Lord for other things to special thankfulness, because He has shown Himself so generous to none among other nations as He has with thee. In the foundation of his holy law and of his Sacraments thou wert present in his memory; He called and chose thee as a daughter of his Church, proposing to nourish thee by his own blood with infinite love.

And if the Author of grace, my most holy Son, as a prudent and wise Artificer, in order to found his

evangelical Church and lay its first foundations in the sacrament of Baptism, humiliated Himself, prayed and fulfilled all justice, acknowledging the inferiority of his human nature; and if, though at the same time God and man, He hesitated not to lower Himself to the nothingness of which his purest soul was created and his human being formed: how much must thou humiliate thyself, who hast committed sins and art less than the dust and despicable ashes? Confess that in justice thou meritest only punishment, the persecution and wrath of all the creatures; that none of the mortals who has offended his Creator and Redeemer can say in truth that any injustice or offense is done to them if all the tribulations and afflictions of the world from its beginning to its end were to fall upon them. Since all sinned in Adam (I Cor. 15, 22), how deeply should they humiliate themselves when the hand of the Lord visits them? (Job 19, 21). If thou shouldst suffer all the afflictions of men with the utmost resignation and at the same time wouldst fulfill all that I enjoin upon thee by my teachings and exhortations with the greatest fidelity, thou nevertheless must esteem thyself as a useless and unprofitable servant (Luke 17, 10). How much then must thou humiliate thyself when thou failest so much in thy duty and in the return due to all the blessings received from God? As I desire thee to make a proper return both for thyself and for others, think well how much thou art obliged to annihilate thyself to the very dust, not offering any resistance, nor ever being satisfied until the Most High receive thee as his daughter and accept thee as such in his own presence and in the celestial vision of the triumphant Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXV.

GOD'S CLEMENCY.

My daughter, corporal penances are so appropriate and fitted to mortal creatures, that the ignorance of this truth and the neglect and contempt of bodily mortification cause the loss of many souls and bring many more into the danger of eternal loss. The first reason why men should afflict their body and mortify their flesh is their having been conceived in sin (Ps. 50, 7). By this original sin human nature is depraved, filled with passions, rebellious to reason, inclined to evil and adverse to the spirit (Rom. 7, 23). If the soul allows itself to be carried away by them, it will be precipitated by the first vice into many others. But if this beastly flesh is curbed by mortification and penance, it loses its strength and acknowledges the authority of the spirit and the light of truth. The second reason is that none of the mortals have altogether avoided sinning against God; and the punishment and retribution must inevitably correspond to the guilt, either in this life or the next; therefore, as the soul commits sin in union with the body, it follows that both of them must be punished. The interior sorrow is not sufficient for atonement, if the flesh seeks to evade the punishment corresponding to the guilt. Moreover, the debt is so great and the satisfaction that can be given by the creature so limited and scanty that there remains continual uncertainty whether the Judge is satisfied even after the exertions of a whole

lifetime: hence, the soul should find no rest to the end of life.

Even though divine clemency is so liberal with men, that, if they try to satisfy for their sins by penance as far as their limited capacity goes, God remits their offenses and in addition thereto has promised the guilty ones new gifts and graces and eternal rewards: yet his faithful and prudent servants, who really love their Lord, are constrained voluntarily to add other penances; for the debtor who merely wishes to do what he is obliged to and adds nothing of his own freewill, certainly pays his debts, but will remain poor and destitute, if after payment of his debts nothing remains. What then are those to expect, who neither pay nor make any efforts towards paying? The third reason for bodily mortification, and the most urgent one, is the duty of Christians to imitate their divine Teacher and Master. Moreover, my divine Son and I, without being guilty of any faults, or bad inclinations, devoted ourselves to labors and made our lives a continual practice of penance and mortification of the flesh. It was thus that the Lord saw fit to attain the glory of his body and of his holy name, and He wished me to follow Him in all things. If We then pursued such a course of life because it was reasonable, what must be thought of mortals that seek nought but sweetness and delight, and abhor all penances, affronts, ignominies, fasting and mortification? Shall then only Christ, our Lord, and I suffer all these hardships while the guilt-laden debtors and deservers of all these punishments throw themselves head over heels into the filth of their carnal inclinations? Shall they employ their faculties, given to them for the service of Christ, my Lord, and for his following, merely in dancing attendance on their lusts and the devil, who

has introduced evil into the world? This absurd position, maintained by the children of Adam, is the cause of great indignation in the just Judge.

It is true, my daughter, that by the bodily afflictions and mortifications of my most blessed Son, the defects and deficiencies of human merits have been atoned for; and that He wished me, as a mere creature and as one taking the place of other creatures, to co-operate with Him most perfectly and exactly all in his penances and exercises. But this was not in order to exempt men from the practice of penance, but in order to encourage them to it; for in order merely to save them, it was not necessary to suffer so much. Our blessed Savior, as a true Father and Brother, wished also to enhance the labors and penances of those who were to follow in his footsteps; for the efforts of creatures are of little value in the eyes of God unless they are made precious by the merits of Christ. If this is true of works which are entirely virtuous and perfect, how much more is it true of those which are infected with so many faults and deficiencies, even in the greatest acts of virtue, as ordinarily performed by the children of Adam? For in the works of even the most spiritual and virtuous persons many deficiencies occur. These deficiencies are made good by the merits of Christ, our Lord, so that the works of men may become acceptable to the eternal Father. But those who neglect good works and remain altogether idle can by no means expect to apply to themselves the good works of Christ; for they have in themselves nothing that can be perfected by the works of Christ, but only such things as deserve condemnation. I do not speak now, my daughter, of the damnable error of some of the faithful, who have introduced into the works of penance the sensuality and vanity of the world,

so that they merit greater punishment for their penance than for their sins, since they foster in their penances vain and imperfect purposes and forget the supernatural ends of penance, which alone give value to penance and life to the soul. On some other occasion, if necessary, I will speak of this error; do thou now deplore this blindness and labor with great zeal; for if thy labors were even as great as that of the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, they would be no greater than they should be. Chastise thy body with ever greater severity, and remember that thou art deficient in many things, while thou hast but a short life and art so weak and incapable of repaying thy debts.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A DIFFICULTY SOLVED.

Queen of all the heavens and Mistress of the universe, thy kind condescension emboldens me to ask Thee, as my Teacher and Mother, for information concerning a certain doubt raised in my mind by the mention of the celestial food, which the angels served to the Savior in the desert. I understood it to be of the same quality as that served to Thee and to the Lord on other occasions, when the ordinary food was wanting. I have called it celestial food, because I had no other name for it; yet I do not know if that name is appropriate. For I am uncertain whence this food was procured and what was its nature. In heaven I understand, there is no need of bodily food, for there the earthly mode of sustaining life is not continued. Although the blessed enjoy also sensible delight from created objects, and also the taste must have its proper function in heaven just as the other senses, I suspect that its pleasures are not derived from the eating of food, but from some overflow of the soul's glory into the body and its senses. Thus the grossness and imperfection of the senses in mortal life have no share in their heavenly activity and in its objects. Of all this, I, being so ignorant, desire to be informed by thy motherly kindness and condescension.

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE
HEAVENLY LADY.

My daughter, thou hast well doubted: for it is true, that in heaven no material food or nourishment

is used, as thou hast already understood and declared. The food which the angels brought to my holy Son and to me, was truly a heavenly food, and I myself have suggested this name to thee, because the strength of this food is heavenly and not earthly, where everything is gross, very material and limited. It will help thee to understand something of the quality of this food, and the manner of its creation, when I tell thee, that the Lord, to supply our wants, made use of some created material, most ordinarily water, on account of its clearness and simple composition; for the Lord does not require complicated matter for his miracles. At other times it was bread or some kinds of fruit. These materials He furnished with such a power and such qualities of taste, that they exceeded, as heaven does the earth, all the delicacies here below. There is nothing in the world which can be compared to them; for all other food is insipid and strengthless in comparison to this celestial food. To understand this the better, consider the examples mentioned in holy Scripture: for instance the food given to Elias, by the strength of which he walked for forty days and nights to mount Horeb; the manna, which was called the bread of the angels, because they prepared it by condensing the vapors of the earth (Exod. 16, 14) and thus condensed and shaped like grain, they showered it upon the earth. It possessed a great variety of tastes, as Scripture tells us, and it was very nourishing to the body. Also the water converted into wine by the most holy Son at the nuptials of Cana was of such good taste and strength, that it excited the admiration of the guests (John 2, 10).

In the same way as the Lord gave a supernatural excellence to the water and turned it into a most sweet

and delicate liquor, so He also gave a spiritual strength to the bread or the fruit. Such nourishment restored the waste of bodily strength and delighted the senses in an admirable manner, renewing their vigor and fitting them for labors and difficulties without causing the least loathing or inconvenience. This kind of food was ministered by the holy angels to my most holy Son after his fast, and this I and my spouse Joseph received on different occasions. The Almighty showed the same favor also to some of his friends and servants, rejoicing them with heavenly food, although not so frequently and in so wonderful a manner as He did Us. Thy doubt is then answered; but now listen to the instruction pertaining to this chapter.

In order to understand better what thou hast written, thou must keep in mind three motives of our Lord in entering upon this battle with Lucifer, and this understanding will furnish thee great light and strength against Satan and his followers. His first motive was to destroy sin and the seeds of sin, sown in the human nature by satan in the first transgression of Adam. These seeds are the seven capital vices: pride, avarice, lust and the others, being the seven heads of the dragon. Lucifer appointed an infernal chieftain over each one of these vices in the battle of hell against the human race, and the evil spirits were distributed into squadrons under these leaders in order to maintain the sort of orderly confusion, which I have described in the first part of this heavenly history (Part I, No. 103). Accordingly my divine Son entered into conflict with each one of these princes of darkness, vanquishing them and destroying their power. In the Gospels only three temptations are mentioned, being those which are more manifest to the senses; but the conflict and the triumph

was far more extensive, for Christ our Lord overcame all these princes and their vices. Pride He overcame by his humility; anger, by his meekness; avarice, by his contempt for riches; and all the other vices, by their corresponding virtues. The greatest defeat and consternation, however, overtook these enemies at the foot of the Cross, when they became certain that it was the incarnate Word who had conquered and crushed them. Since that time they are timid in entering into conflict with those men, who rely on the power and triumph and power of my Son.

The second motive for engaging in this conflict was obedience to the command of the eternal Father, who not only wished Him to die for men, and redeem them by his Passion and Death, but also to enter into battle with the demons and vanquish them by the force of his incomparable virtues. The third motive, and the one that was consequent upon the second, was to furnish mankind an example and a model for triumphing over their enemies and to take away from all men any cause of wonder or surprise at being tempted and persecuted by the devils. He wished that all should have this consolation in their temptations and conflicts, that their Redeemer and Teacher first suffered them in his own Person (Heb. 4, 15); for, though in some respects his temptations were different from ours, yet in substance, they were entirely the same, only of greater satanic force and malice. My Lord permitted Lucifer to strain all his powers in his battle with Him, in order that by his divine power He might crush and enfeeble hell in its battles against mankind, making it more easy for us to overcome them, if we wish to avail ourselves of the advantages gained by this very conflict of our Redeemer.

All mortals have need of this instruction, if they are to vanquish the demon; but thou, my daughter, needest it more than many generations on account of the wrath of this dragon against thee and on account of thy natural weakness in battle, when not assisted by my teaching and this example. Before all see that thou keep in subjection thy flesh and the influences of the world. Mortifying thy flesh and flying the world by retiring from creatures to the interior of thy soul, thus conquering both these enemies and preserving the blessed light of grace, which thou there receivest, and loving nothing except in as far as well ordered charity permits. For this purpose renew in thyself the memory of the narrow path pointed out to thee; for the Lord has given thee a natural faculty of ardent love, and We wish that thou consecrate this faculty entirely to the love of God. Consent not to any movement of thy appetites, no matter in how small a matter; and allow thy senses no liberty, except for the exaltation of the Most High, or for suffering or doing something for the benefit and love of thy neighbor. If thou obey me in all things, I will see that thou art protected and strengthened against this cruel dragon for the battles of the Lord (I King 25, 28). A thousand shields will surround thee both for defense and offense against the demon. Accustom thyself always to use against him the words of holy Writ, not deigning to exchange many words with such an astute enemy. Weak creatures should not indulge in conferences or arguments with their mortal enemy and the master of lies; since even my divine Son, who was all-powerful and infinitely wise, did not do so. In this He gave the souls an example how circumspectly they are to act with the devil. Arm thyself with living faith, unwavering hope and love of

humility, for these are the virtues by which the dragon is crushed and vanquished and against which he dares not make stand. He flies from them because they are powerful weapons against his pride and arrogance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

VALUE OF THE IMMORTAL SOUL.

I will give thee two important lessons deduced from this chapter. First, love solitude and seek it with particular affection in order that thou mayest partake of the blessings promised and merited by my divine Son for those who imitate Him therein. As far as possible, when thou art not obliged to converse with thy neighbor in virtue of obedience always try to be alone; and when thou art obliged to come out of thy retirement and solitude, carry it with thee in the secret of thy heart in such a manner that thy senses and thy occupations shall not deprive thee of it. Attend to thy outward employments as if they were to be done only in passing, and consider thy retirement as something which is to be permanent; for this purpose thou must not allow the images of creatures to enter thy mind, for, very often, they occupy the mind more completely than the objects themselves, and they always embarrass the soul and take away from it the liberty of the heart. It is unworthy of thee to let thy heart be interested in anything or be taken up by any creature. My divine Son wishes to be in it all alone and this is also what I desire. My second lesson is that thou learn to set a proper value on thy soul, in order to preserve it in its purity and innocence. Over and above this, however, although it is my will that thou labor for the justification of all men, I wish that thou, in imitation of my Son

and of me, busy thyself especially with the poor and despised of this world. These little ones often beg for the bread of counsel and instruction (Thren. 4, 4), and they find none to give it to them, as do the rich and powerful of the earth who have many to advise them. Of these poor and despised ones many come to thee; admit them with true compassion; console them kindly, so that, in their simplicity, they may follow enlightened counsel; for counsel is to be administered to the better instructed in a different way. Seek to gain those souls, who, on account of their temporal necessities, are so much the more precious in the eyes of God; I wish that thou labor incessantly, that they and all others may not waste the fruit of Redemption; nor do thou ever rest from this labor; be ready even to die, if necessary, to advance this enterprise.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DIVINE GRACE.

My daughter, all the doings of my most holy Son prove his divine love toward men and how different this love is from that which they have among themselves. Mortals are ordinarily so small-minded, niggardly, avaricious and sluggish, that they are usually not moved to love any one unless they see some advantage in the objects of their love. Hence the love of creatures is founded upon the good thought to be in that which they love. But divine love, having its fountain within itself, and being capable of effecting its own wishes, does not seek the creature because it is worthy, but it loves creatures in order to make them worthy of love. Therefore, no soul must despair of the divine goodness. Yet no one must on that account have a vain and presumptuous trust, expecting divine love to work in it effects of grace of which he is altogether unworthy; for in these gifts of his love the Most High follows a course of equity most mysterious to the creature. Although God loves them all and wishes all to be saved, yet in the distribution of these gifts and effects of his love He undeniably applies a certain measure and weight of his sanctuary, by which He dispenses them. Now, as man cannot penetrate or comprehend this secret, he must take care not to forfeit or lose the first grace and first vocation; for he does not know whether he will not lose the second by his ingratitude, and he can be certain of not losing the second only by making

use of the first grace. The soul can know for certain only this: that grace will not be denied if the soul does not make itself unworthy. These workings of divine love in the soul are accompanied by interior enlightenment, so that in the presence of this light, men are reformed for their sins and convinced of their evil state and of the danger of eternal death. But human pride makes many of them so foolish and base of heart that they resist this light; others are hard to move and never fail to have some vain excuse for their negligence; whence they counteract the first effects of the love of God and make themselves unfit for future graces. Now, without the help of grace, men cannot avoid evil, nor can they do the good, or even know it; thus many cast themselves from abyss to abyss. For, since they counteract and repel grace, and thus are unworthy of further help, they inevitably draw upon themselves ruin by falling from sin to sin.

Be attentive, therefore, my dearest, to the light which has excited thy heart to the love of the Most High; for by the enlightenment which thou hast received in the history of my life, even if thou hadst no other light, thou art placed under such great obligations that if thou dost not correspond with them in the holiness of thy life, thou shalt be more reprehensible in the eyes of God and in mine, and in the presence of angels and men, than all the other human-born. Let also the conduct of the first disciples of my most holy Son, and the promptitude with which they followed Him, serve thee as an example. Although his forbearance and kind instruction were a special grace, they faithfully corresponded to it and followed the teachings of their Master. Their human nature was weak, yet they did not make themselves incapable of receiving further blessings of

God's right hand and they set their desires toward much higher aims than their weak strength would be able to attain. In order to bring this faithful love in thee to its greatest perfection, I wish that thou imitate me in all the works which I have performed on this occasion, and in the desire to die for my divine Son or with Him, if it had been permitted. Prepare thy heart for what I shall yet reveal to thee of the Death of the Lord and of my own life in order that thou mayest in all things do what is perfect and holy. Consider, my daughter, that I have a complaint against the human race, of which I have spoken to thee at other times, and which applies to nearly all men: that they neglect and forget to inform themselves of what I and my most holy Son have done for them; that they do not weigh gratefully the blessings of each hour, nor seek to make a proper return. See that thou do not thus offend me, since I have made thee a sharer in these exalted secrets and sacraments, wherein thou findest so much light and instruction and the practice of the highest and most excellent virtues. Raise thyself above thyself, labor diligently in order that thou mayest receive more and more grace, and, by corresponding with it, gather much merit and eternal rewards.

BOOK SIX

Lessons of the Queen in Connection with the History of Her Life during
the Public Teaching and the Passion of Her Son

CHAPTER I.

THE FORGETFULNESS AND NEGLIGENCE OF CHRISTIANS.

My daughter, without any excuse is the forgetfulness and negligence shown by each and everyone of the children of the Church in regard to the spread and manifestation of the glory of their God by making known his holy name to all rational creatures. This negligence is much more blamable now, since the eternal Word became man in my womb, taught the world and redeemed it for this very purpose. With this end in view the Lord founded his Church, enriched it with blessings and spiritual treasures, assigned to it ministers and endowed it with temporal riches. All these gifts are intended not only to preserve the Church in its present state, but to extend it and draw others to the regeneration of the Catholic faith. All should help along to spread the fruits of the Death of their Redeemer. Some can do it by prayer and urgent desires for the exaltation of his holy name; others by almsgiving, others by diligent preaching, others by fervent works of charity. But if this remissness is perhaps less culpable in the ignorant and the poor, who have none to exhort them; it is very reprehensible in the rich and the powerful, and especially in the ministers and prelates of the Church, whose particular duty is the advancement of the Church of God. Many of them, for-

getting the terrible account which they will have to render, seek only their own vain honor instead of Christ's. They waste the patrimony of the blood of the Redeemer in undertakings and aims not even fit to mention; and through their fault allow innumerable souls to perish, who by proper exertions could have been gained for the holy Church; or at least they lose the merit of such exertions and deprive Christ of the glory of having such faithful ministers in his Church. The same responsibility rests upon the princes and the powerful of the world, who receive from the hands of God, honors, riches and temporal blessings for advancing the glory of the Deity, and yet think less of this obligation than of any other.

Do thou grieve for all these evils and labor, as far as thy strength will allow, that the glory of the Most High be manifest, that He be known in all nations, and that from the very stones may be generated sons of Abraham (Matth. 3, 9), since of all this thou art capable. Beseech Him to send able workers and worthy ministers to his Church in order to draw men to the sweet yoke of the Gospel; for great and plentiful is the harvest, and few are the faithful laborers and zealous helpers for harvesting it. Let what I have told thee of my maternal and loving solicitude in gaining followers for my Son and in preserving them in his doctrine and companionship, be to thee a living example for thy own conduct. Never let the flame of this charity die out in thy breast. Let also my silence and modesty at the wedding feast be an inviolable rule for thee and thy religious in all exterior actions, in retirement, moderation and discretion of words, especially in the presence of men; for these virtues are the court dress, with which the spouses of Christ must adorn themselves in order to find grace in his divine eyes.

CHAPTER II.

INTERIOR ENLIGHTENMENTS.

My daughter, it is true that I labored more than is known or imagined by mortals in following and accompanying my divine Son to the foot of the Cross; nor were my anxieties for their welfare any less after his death, as thou wilt be made to understand in writing the third part of this history. Amidst all my labors and hardships I was ineffably rejoiced in spirit to see the incarnate Word working for the salvation of men and opening the book sealed by the seven mysteries of his Divinity and sacred humanity. The human race owes me no less for my rejoicing at the welfare of each one, than for my solicitude in procuring it, because both sprang from the same love. In this I wish thee to imitate me, as I have so often exhorted thee. Although thou dost not hear with thy bodily ears the sermons of my divine Son, nor his own voice in preaching, thou canst yet imitate me in the reverence with which I listened to Him; for it is the same One that speaks to thy heart, and who teaches thee the same doctrine. Therefore, I exhort thee whenever thou recognizest the enlightening voice of thy Spouse and Pastor, to kneel down in reverence and listen to his words, adoring Him full of thankfulness and writing his counsel in thy heart. If thou happenest to be in a public place, where thou canst not show this external reverence, do it interiorly and obey Him in all things as if thou wert present at his very preaching; for, just as hearing

Him then without obeying Him would not have made thee happy, so thou canst now make thyself blessed by executing that which Thou hearest Him say to thee interiorly, even though thou dost not hear Him with thy bodily ears. Great is thy obligation, since most extraordinary is the kindness and mercy shown to thee by the Most High and by me. Be thou not dull of heart, lest thou remain poor amidst such riches of the divine enlightenment.

But not only to the interior voice of the Lord must thou listen reverently, but also to the voice of his ministers, preachers and priests, whose words are the echoes of the Most High and the aqueducts through which the blessed doctrine of life and the perennial fountains of divine truth flow to the souls. In them God speaks and the voice of his divine law resounds; hear them with such reverence, that thou art unwilling to look for any error, nor presume to pass judgment on what they say. For thee all must appear wise and eloquent, and in every one of them hear only the voice of Christ, my Son and Lord. Be warned not to fall into the foolish presumption of the worldly, who with very reprehensible vanity and pride, most hateful in the sight of God, despise his ministers and preachers, because they do not speak in accordance with their depraved taste. When they go to hear the divine truth, they judge only of the expression and style, as if the word of God were not simple and strong (Heb. 4, 12), depending not on oratorical and artful arrangement of words, adjusted merely to the weakness of those that listen. Do not count this as an unimportant advice; listen to all that I say to thee in this history, since, as a careful Teacher, I wish to inform thee of little things as well as of great, of unimportant as well as of im-

portant points. Remember, that to perform anything with perfection is always great. I also exhort thee to treat affably the rich as the poor, without the acceptance of persons so common among the children of Adam. My divine Son and I rejected and condemned all such distinction, showing ourselves equally kind to all, and even more so to those who were most despised, indigent and afflicted (James 2, 2). Worldly wisdom looks upon the person, not at the state of the souls, nor at virtue, but at outward ostentation; but heavenly prudence considers the image of God in all. Just as little shouldst thou wonder that thy sisters and neighbors perceive thy defects of nature, such as are derived from the first sin, thy infirmities, fatigues, thy appetites and other shortcomings. Sometimes the hiding of these defects is hypocrisy and want of humility; the friends of God should fear only sin and should desire to die rather than commit it: all the other defects do not sully the conscience and it is not necessary to conceal them.

CHAPTER III.

DANGERS OF HUMAN PRAISE.

In his malice and astuteness, the ancient serpent strains all his powers to destroy in the human heart the science of humility, sowed by the Redeemer as a seed of holiness in the human heart; and in its place he seeks to sow the cockle of pride (Matth. 13, 25). In order to root out these and allow free growth to the blessing of humility, it is necessary that the soul consent and seek to be humiliated by its fellow-creatures and that it ask the Lord incessantly and in all sincerity of heart for this virtue and for the means to attain it. Very scarce are the souls that apply themselves to this science and reach the perfection of this virtue; for it requires entire conquest of one's whole self to which few attain, even among those who profess to be virtuous. This contagion of pride has so deeply penetrated into the human faculties, that it is communicated to nearly all of men's doings and there is scarcely one among men who is without pride, just as the rose never grows without thorns or the grain without husks. On this account the Most High makes so much of the truly humble; and those who entirely triumph over pride, He exalts and places with the princes of his people, esteeming them as his favored children and exempting them from the jurisdiction of the demon. Thus it comes that the devil dares scarcely approach them, because he fears the humble and their victories over him more than the fires of hell.

I desire, my dearest, that thou attain the inestimable treasure of humility in all its fulness, and that thou offer to the Most High a docile and yielding heart, in order that He may impress upon it, like on soft wax, the image of my own most humble activity. As thou hast been informed of such deeply hidden secrets concerning this sacrament, thou art under great obligations to correspond to my wishes, not losing the least occasion of humiliation and advancing in this virtue. Neglect none of them, since thou knowest how much I sought after them, who was the Mother of God himself, most pure and full of grace. The greater my prerogatives, so much the greater was my humility, because in my estimation they far exceeded my merits and only increased my obligations. All you children of Adam (Ps. 50, 7), were conceived in sin, and there is none who has not sinned on his own account. If none can deny this infection of his nature, why should not all humiliate themselves before God and before men? Lowering themselves to the very dust and placing themselves in the last place is not such a great humiliation for those who have sinned, for even then they will always be more honored than they deserve. The truly humble must lower themselves beneath that which they have deserved. If all the creatures would despise and abhor them, or offend them; if they would consider themselves worthy of hell-fire, they would only fulfill justice, but not the requirement of humility, since that would only be admitting their deserts. But real, deep humility goes to the length of desiring a greater humiliation than that due to one's self in justice. On this account there is no mortal who can attain to the kind of humility which I practiced, such as thou hast understood and described; but the Most High will be satisfied with and

ready to reward the efforts of those who humble themselves as far as they can and as they deserve in justice.

Let then the sinners admit their baseness and understand how they make of themselves monsters of hell by imitating Lucifer in his pride. For pride found him beauteous and endowed with great gifts of grace and nature; and although he dissipated these blessings, he had nevertheless possessed them as his own. But man, who is mere slime, and moreover has sinned and is full of ugliness and baseness, is a monster, if he bloats himself up in vain pride. By such absurdity he surpasses even the demon; since man possesses a nature neither so noble, nor was ever gifted with such grace and beauty as Lucifer. He and his hellish followers despise and laugh over men, who in such inferiority swell up in pride; for they can well understand this vain and contemptible madness and delirium. Mind well therefore, my daughter, this lesson, and humiliate thyself lower than the earth, showing just as little sense of injury as the dust, whenever the Lord, either himself or through others, sends thee humiliation. Never judge thyself injured by any one nor consider thyself offended; if thou abhor pretense and lying, remember, that the greatest offense is to aspire after honor or high position. Do not attribute to creatures that which God brings about in order to humiliate thee or others by affliction and tribulations; for this is protesting against mere instruments, while it is divine mercy which inflicts punishment on men for their humiliation. This, if they would only understand, is really what is happening by the disposition of the Lord to the kingdoms of our day. Humiliate thyself in the divine presence for thyself and for all thy fellow-men, in order to placate his wrath, just as if thou alone wert guilty; and as if thou never

hadst made any satisfaction; since during mortal life no one can ever know whether he has satisfied for his transgressions. Seek to appease Him as if thou alone hadst offended Him; and in regard to the gifts and favors which thou hast received and dost receive, show thyself grateful as one who deserves much less and owes much more. By these considerations humiliate thyself more than all others, and labor without ceasing to correspond to the divine clemency, which has shown itself so liberal toward thee.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTRAST OF THE WORLDLY AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

My daughter, thou hast been very short in describing the mysteries of this chapter; yet a great lesson is contained therein for thee and all the children of light. Write it in thy heart and notice well the great difference between the innocence and holiness of the Baptist, who was poor, afflicted, persecuted and imprisoned, and the abominable wickedness of Herod, the powerful king, who was flattered and served in the midst of his riches and base pleasures. Both were of the same human nature, but entirely different in the sight of God, according as they used ill or well their free will and the created things around them. The penance, poverty, humility, contempt, tribulations of saint John, and his zeal for the glory of my divine Son, merited for him the singular favor of dying in our arms. Herod, on the contrary, by his hollow pomp, his pride, vanity, tyranny and wickedness was struck down by the minister of God in order to be punished in the eternal flames. Remember that the same happens now and always in the world; although men do not pay attention to it or fear it. They fear the vain strength of the world, not reflecting that it is but fleeting shadow and withering grass.

Just as little do men think of the ultimate end, and of the abyss, into which vices draw them even in this world. Although the demon cannot take away man's liberty, nor ever completely sway his free will, yet, by leading them into so many and grievous sins, he obtains

such an influence over it, that he is enabled to use it as an instrument of the evil he proposes. In spite of witnessing so many and such terrible examples, men remain callous to the fearful danger to which they expose themselves by their sins in imitation of Herod and his adulterous concubine. In order to cast souls into this abyss of wickedness Lucifer meets them with the vain pride and honor of this world and with its base pleasures, representing them as alone important and desirable. Thus the ignorant children of perdition loosen the bonds of reason in order to follow the degrading pleasures of their flesh and be enslaved by their mortal enemy. My daughter, the Savior and I have taught the way of humility, of contempt, and tribulation. This is the royal road, on which we first walked, and of which We have set Ourselves up as Teachers. We are the Protectors of all the afflicted and ill-used, ready to assist by miraculous and especial favors all those who call upon Us in their necessities. Of this assistance and protection the followers of this world and its vain pleasures deprive themselves, since they hate the way of the Cross. To the Cross thou wast called and invited, and on account of it thou art favored with the sweetness of my loving guidance. Follow me and labor to imitate me, since thou hast found the secret treasure (Matth. 12, 11) and the precious pearl, for the possession of which thou must despise all that is earthly and give up all human freedom in so far as it is contrary to the pleasure of my most exalted Lord.

CHAPTER V.

ESTEEM FOR THE FRIENDS OF GOD.

My daughter, all that thou hast written in this chapter is a most important warning for all those that live in the flesh and in the imminent danger of losing their eternal happiness. It should teach them to seek my most kind and powerful intercession and to fear the judgments of the Most High; for in this lies an efficacious means of salvation and of meriting higher reward for the Lord. I wish to remind thee once more, that among the secrets revealed to the beloved John at the last Supper, was also this, that he had become the beloved disciple of Christ on account of his love toward me, and that Judas fell because he despised the mercy and kindness which I had shown him. At that time, also, the Evangelist understood other great mysteries communicated and wrought in me; that I should take part in the labor and suffering of the Passion and that he should have special charge of me. My dearest, the purity which I require of thee must be greater than that of an angel; and if thou strive after it thou wilt become my dearest child, as saint John, and a most beloved and favored spouse of my Son and Lord. His example and the ruin of Judas should continually serve thee as a stimulus and as a warning, to seek only after my love and to be sincerely thankful for the love shown thee without thy merit.

I wish thee also to understand another secret hidden from the world: namely, that one of the most

vile and horrible sins before the Lord is the little esteem in which the just and the friends of the Church are held, and especially the little veneration shown toward me, who was chosen for his Mother and am the cause of the happiness of all men. If the failure to love the enemies and contempt of them is so displeasing to the Lord and to the saints of heaven (Matth. 18, 35), how shall He bear with such treatment of his most dear friends, whom He holds as the apple of his eye and in deepest affection? (Ps. 33, 16). This counsel thou canst never bear in mind too much in this mortal life, and it is one of the signs of reprobation to hold in abhorrence the just. Beware of this danger and judge no one, especially those that reprehend and admonish thee (Matth. 7, 1). Do not allow thyself to desire worldly things, least of all any office of superiority; a desire which allures the human sense, disturbs the judgment and obscures reason. Envy no one his honor, nor the possession of any earthly thing, nor seek to obtain from the Lord anything else than his love and friendship. Man is full of blindest inclinations, and if he does not restrain them, he will begin to ask for that which will cause his eternal perdition. Sometimes the Lord, according to hidden judgments, grants these petitions in punishment for wicked desires and of other sins, as it happened with Judas. Such souls receive earthly reward for any good actions which they may have performed during mortal life. If thou wilt look into the deceptive course of the lovers of this world, thou wilt see that they consider themselves fortunate, whenever they attain all that they desire according to their earthly inclinations. This only hastens their greater misfortune; for they, having received their reward, cannot expect any in the eternal life. But the just, who despise the world and meet with

many adversities, are withdrawn and shielded from danger, because the Lord denies them the temporal goods, which they desire and ask for. In order that thou mayest not fall into such danger, I exhort and command thee never to hanker after nor to seek earthly possession. Separate thyself from all; preserve thy will free and independent; never desire for anything beyond what is God's pleasure, for He will assume charge of all those that resign themselves to his divine Providence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD.

My daughter, thou daily understandest and declarest more fully in this history, that my Son, and I with Him, in our ardent love, embraced the way of the Cross and suffering for the whole course of our natural life. Thou receivest this knowledge more fully and hearest this doctrine repeated so often, that thou must strive to follow it closely in thy daily life. This duty grows upon thee from the day in which my Son has chosen thee as bride, and will oblige thee more and more, so that thou canst not evade the duty of embracing and loving hardships to such an extent, that thy greatest pain shall be to be without them. Renew every day this desire in thy heart, for I wish thee to be very proficient in this science, which the world abhors so much. But remember, at the same time, that God does not afflict creatures merely for the sake of afflicting them, but in order to make them more capable and worthy of receiving the blessings and treasures prepared for them beyond all human conception (I Cor. 2, 9). For the confirmation of this truth and as a pledge of his promises He permitted the Transfiguration of Himself on Mount Tabor in my presence and that of some of the disciples. In the prayer which He then made to the eternal Father and which I alone knew of and understood, He humbled Himself before his Father confessing Him (as He always did in his prayers) as the true God, infinite in his perfections and attributes, and besought Him to concede

a share of the glory of his own body to all those, who in their mortal bodies should afflict themselves and bear hardships for his love and in imitation of his own, and to grant this glory in the measure proper to each after the resurrection of their bodies in the final judgment. Since the eternal Father granted this request, there is a certain contract between God and man. The glory which was given to the body of Christ the Savior was a pledge of that which Christ was to secure for all his followers. Great, therefore, is the value of the momentary hardships endured in the privation of earthly delights and in mortifications and sufferings for the sake of Christ (II Cor. 4, 17).

On account of the merits of this prayer of Christ, this glory which belongs to Him is due to the creatures in justice, since men are the members of Christ's mystical body (II Tim. 4, 8). Yet this union with Christ, by which man merits such reward, must be brought about by grace and by imitation of the same suffering which merited it for the Redeemer. If all bodily suffering merits its crown, a much greater crown is merited by the patient endurance and pardoning of injuries, and by returning good for them, as We acted in regard to Judas; for the Lord did not only not take away from Judas his apostolate, or show Himself in any way irritated against him, but He patiently bore with him to the very end, when Judas had already made himself altogether unfit for any graces by giving himself up to the devil. During our mortal life the Lord is very slow in visiting his vengeance upon us; but He will make up for his slowness in the severity of his punishments after death. If then God suffers and bears with us so much, how much must one poor worm of the earth bear with another, since both are of the same nature and condition?

By the light of this truth and by the charity of the Lord and Spouse, thou must regulate the amount of thy patience and long suffering with others and the zeal for their salvation. I do not say that thou must therefore permit what is against the honor of God, for that would not be a true zeal for the good of thy neighbor; but thou must love them as creatures of the Lord and abhor sin; thou must suffer and ignore whatever is done against thee, always seeking, as far as in thee lies, the salvation of others. Do not lose heart, when thou seest no immediate fruit, but continue to present to the eternal Father the merits of my most holy Son, my intercession and that of the saints and angels; for as God is charity and as they are the ministers of the Most High, they will gladly make use of this same charity for the benefit of those who are still on their pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VII.

VANITY OF OUTWARD SHOW.

My daughter, thou hast partly described and hast understood much more concerning the mysterious triumph of my most holy Son on his entrance into Jerusalem and its preparations; but thou wilt understand much more of it, when thou shalt come face to face with the Lord, for as pilgrims, mortals cannot penetrate into such secrets. Nevertheless thou canst learn and understand enough from what thou hast written to perceive how exalted are the judgments of the Lord and how far removed from all the thoughts of men (Is. 55, 9). The Most High looks into the hearts of men and at the interior, where is hidden the beauty of the King's daughter (Ps. 44, 14); while men look only at the exterior and at what is perceived by the senses. On this account the just and the chosen ones are highly esteemed by the Lord in their humiliation and self-abasement; while the proud are cast down and rejected by Him in their self-sufficiency. This truth, my daughter, is understood by few, and therefore the children of darkness know not how to strive after any other honor or exaltation than that of the world. Sad to say, also the children of the Church, although well knowing and confessing that this worldly honor is vain and without substance, and that it does not have any more stability than the flowers or herbs of the field, do not live up to this knowledge. As their conscience does not give them witness of faithful co-operation with the light of grace and the practice of virtue, they seek after the false and deceitful applause

and commendation of men; whereas God alone can truly honor and exalt those, who merit his regard. The world ordinarily and fraudulently misjudges true merit, lavishing its honors upon those who least deserve it, or upon those who know how to solicit and strive after it most cunningly and inconsiderately.

Fly from this deceit, my daughter, and let the praise of men make no impression upon thee; repel its flatteries and compliments. Give to each the importance and consideration due to it; for the children of the world are very much blinded in their judgments. None of the mortals could ever merit the honor and applause of men so much as my most holy Son; yet He readily yielded it up and judged at its true worth that which the people gave Him at his entrance into Jerusalem. He permitted it merely in order that the divine power might be manifested and in order that his Passion might afterwards be so much the more ignominious. He wished to teach men, that no one should accept honors for their own value, but in order that the higher end, that is the glory of God and the exaltation of the Most High, might thereby be advanced; that without this object in view they are altogether vain and useless, void of profit or advantage of any kind; for they can never procure the true happiness of a creature capable of eternal glory. Since I see thee desirous of knowing why I was not present at this triumph of my most holy Son, I shall fulfill thy desire, and I refer thee to what thou hast often related in this history about the clear vision of the interior of my Son, which was always present to me. By this vision I was enabled to perceive, when and why He wished me to absent myself from Him. On such occasions I would throw myself at his feet, beseeching Him to declare his will and pleasure in regard

to what I should do. Then the Lord would sometimes give his orders plainly and in express commands; at others He would leave it to my own discretion and choice, permitting me to act according to my prudence and divine enlightenment. This was the course He pursued at the time, when He resolved to enter in triumph the gates of Jerusalem. He left it altogether to my own judgment, whether I should accompany Him or remain in Bethany. Thereupon I asked his permission to absent myself from this mysterious event, begging Him to take me with Him to his Passion and Death. I thought it more befitting and more pleasing in his eyes to offer myself as participant in the ignominies and sorrows of his Passion, than to share in the outward honor given to Him by men. For, as I was his Mother, some of this honor would certainly have devolved upon me, if I had shown myself to those who were praising and blessing Him. I knew that this triumph, beside its not being desired by me, was ordained by the Lord for the manifestation of his infinite power and Divinity, and therefore in no wise pertaining to me; nor would the honor, which they would have extended to me, augment that which was due to Him as the Savior of the human race. At the same time, in order that I might properly rejoice in this mystery and duly glorify the Almighty for these wonders, I was made to see by divine enlightenment and especial vision all that thou has already written concerning this event. This behavior should instruct thee and teach thee to imitate me; follow thou my humble footsteps, withdraw thy affections from all that is earthly, lift thy aspirations on high, despising and fleeing all human honors and in divine enlightenment esteeming them as vanity of vanities and affliction of spirit (Eccles. 1, 14).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABYSSES OF SIN.

My daughter, all that thou hast understood and written in this chapter contains great and instructive mysteries for the mortals who will meditate thereon. Prudently consider first of all, how my most holy Son, though He, in order to foil and overcome the devil, and in order to weaken his power against men, permitted him to retain the nature and the penetrating knowledge of an angel, nevertheless concealed many things from him, as thou hast already recorded in other places. In withholding them from his knowledge the Almighty foiled the malice of this dragon in a manner most befitting his sweet and irresistible Providence. On this account was the hypostatic union of the divine and the human natures concealed, and the devil was allowed to fall into so great confusion regarding this mystery and to be driven into so many cross purposes, until the Lord revealed himself and convinced him of the divine glory of his soul even from the moment of his conception. Likewise He permitted the devil to witness some of the miracles of his most holy life, and concealed from him many others. In a similar manner the Lord provides for the welfare of souls in our days, for, although the devil can by his natural powers inform himself of all the doings of each soul, God will not permit it and hides much from him for reasons of his own Providence. Afterwards He allows him to find them out for his greater humiliation. Thus after the work of the Redemption, He permitted

the demon for his greater torment and confusion to become aware of so many unheeded mysteries. The infernal dragon is continually lurking about to search into the doings of souls, not only into the exterior, but into the interior activities of each soul. But my most holy Son exerts a most loving care over them ever since He was born and died for them.

This blessed care would be much more general and continual with many, if they themselves did not make themselves unworthy by delivering themselves over to the enemy and listening to his deceits and his malicious and cunning advice. Just as the virtuous and the friends of God gradually become instruments in the hands of the Lord and resign themselves entirely to his divine disposition, so that He alone governs and directs them and does not allow them to be moved by other agencies; so, in like manner, many of the reprobate and of those who are forgetful of their Creator and Redeemer and who deliver themselves over to the devil by repeated sins, are moved and drawn into all kinds of wickedness and are mere tools of his depraved malice. An example of this we have in the perfidious disciple and in the murderous pharisees persecuting their Redeemer. None of the mortals are blameless in this respect: for, just as Judas and the priests by the use of their own free will, refused to follow the good advice of the demon and desist from persecuting Christ our Savior, so they could much more easily have refused to join him in persecuting Christ, when they were first tempted. For then they were assisted by grace, if only they wished to use it, while afterwards they were assisted only by their own free choice and led by their bad habits. That they were in the second instance deprived of grace and help of the Holy Ghost, was only just, because they had

given themselves up and subjected themselves to the demon. They had made up their minds to follow him in all his malice and allow themselves to be governed entirely by his perversity, without ever considering the goodness and power of their Creator.

Hence you will understand that this infernal serpent can have no power to lead anyone toward the good, but very much toward leading those souls into sin, who are neglectful in issuing from their evil state. Truly I say to thee, my daughter, that if mortals would thoroughly understand this danger, they would be struck with great terror; for there is no created power, which can prevent a soul that has once yielded to sin from casting itself from abyss to abyss. Since the sin of Adam, the weight of human nature, burdened with the concupiscible and irascible passions, is drawn toward sin as the stone toward its center. Joined to this tendency are the bad habits and customs, the power of satan over those who have sinned, and his unceasing tyranny. Who is there, that is so much an enemy of his own welfare as to despise these dangers? The Almighty alone can free him and to his right hand is reserved the remedy. In spite of all this mortals live as secure and forgetful of their ruin as if each one had it in his own power to prevent and repair it at his pleasure. Though many know and openly confess that they cannot rise from their own ruin without the help of God; yet they allow this consciousness to become a mere habit and a vague sentiment and instead of lovingly seeking his aid, they offend and irritate God, expecting Him to wait upon them with his grace until they are tired of sinning or until they are unable to continue their abominable wickedness and ingratitude.

Do thou fear, my dearest, this dreadful danger

and beware of the first sin, for after the first sin thou wilt be still less able to resist the second, and thou increasest the power of the devil over thee. Remember that thy treasure is most valuable and the vase, in which thou carriest it, fragile: by one fall thou canst lose it all (II Cor. 4, 7). Great is the cunning and sagacity which the serpent uses against thee, and thy insight is but small. Therefore thou must collect thy senses and close them to all outward things; thou must withdraw thy interior within the wall of protection and refuge raised for thee by the Almighty, whence thou canst repel all the inhuman assaults of thy enemies. To excite this fear in thee, it will be sufficient to consider the punishment of Judas which has been made clear to thy understanding. In regard to thy imitation of my behavior in other matters: how thou shouldst act toward those who hate and persecute thee, how thou shouldst love them and bear with them in charity and patience, and how thou shouldst pray for them to the Lord with true zeal for their salvation, as I have done for the traitor Judas: in all this I have before this often exhorted thee. I desire that thou excel and distinguish thyself therein, and that thou instruct thy religious and all those with whom thou dealest in this manner of acting. For in view of the patience and meekness of my most holy Son and my own example, the wicked and all mortals shall be covered with unutterable confusion because they have not pardoned each other with fraternal charity. The sins of hate and vengeance shall be punished with greater severity than other sins on the judgment day; and in this life these vices will soonest drive away the infinite mercy of God and cause eternal punishment of men, unless they amend in sorrow. Those that are kind and sweet toward their enemies and persecutors, and

who forget injuries, resemble on that account more particularly the incarnate Word: for Christ always went about seeking to pardon and to load with blessings those who were in sin. By imitating the charity and the meekness of the Lamb, the soul disposes itself to receive and maintain that noble spirit of charity and love of God and the neighbor, which makes it apt for all the influences of divine grace and benevolence.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD.

My daughter, as thy soul has been furnished with special gifts of enlightenment, I call and invite thee anew to cast thyself into the sea of mysteries contained in the passion and death of my divine Son. Direct all thy faculties and strain all the powers of thy heart and soul, to make thyself at least somewhat worthy of understanding and meditating upon the ignominies and sorrows of the Son of the eternal Father in his death on the Cross for the salvation of men; and also of considering my doings and sufferings in connection with his bitterest Passion. This science, so much neglected by men, I desire that thou, my daughter, study and learn, so as to be able to follow thy Spouse and imitate me, who am thy Mother and Teacher. Writing down and feeling deeply all that I shall teach thee of these mysteries, thou shouldst detach thyself entirely of human and earthly affections and of thy own self, so as freely to follow our footsteps in destitution and poverty. And since I do thee the special favor of calling thee aside to instruct thee in fulfillment of the will of my holy Son and since We seek through thee to teach others; thou shouldst correspond to this copious Redemption as if it was solely for thy benefit and as if all of it would be lost, if thou dost not profit by its blessings. So much must thou esteem it; for in the love which caused my most holy Son to die for thee, He looked upon thee with as great an affection, as if thou hadst been the only one that needed the remedy of his Passion and Death.

This is the standard by which thou must measure thy obligations and thy gratitude. Since thou then both seest the base and dangerous forgetfulness of men in regard to this benefit, and knowest that for these very men their God and Creator had died, it should be thy earnest endeavor to compensate Him for their neglect by thy ardent love, as if the proper return for his benefits was left entirely to thy fidelity and gratitude alone. At the same time grieve over the blind folly of men in despising eternal felicity and in treasuring up for themselves the wrath of the Lord by frustrating the boundless effects of his love for the world. This is the purpose for which I make known to Thee so many secrets and my unparalleled sorrow in the hour of his parting from me to go to his sacred sufferings unto death. There are no words which can describe the bitterness of my soul on that occasion; but the contemplation of it should cause thee to esteem no hardship great, to seek no rest or consolation on earth, except to suffer and die for Christ. Do thou sorrow with me; for this faithful correspondence is due to me, who favor thee with these graces.

I wish thee also to ponder, what a horrible crime it is in the eyes of the Lord, in mine, and in those of all the saints, that men should despise and neglect the frequent reception of the holy Communion, and that they should approach it without preparation and fervent devotion. Principally in order that thou mayest understand and record this warning, I have manifested to thee, what I did on that occasion and how I prepared myself so many years for receiving my most blessed Son in the holy Sacrament and also the rest, which thou art yet to write for the instruction and confusion of men. For if I, who was innocent of any hindering sin and

filled with all graces, sought to increase my fitness for this favor by such fervent acts of love, humility and gratitude, consider what efforts thou and the other children of the Church, who every day and hour incur new guilt and blame, must make in order to fit yourselves for the beauty of the Divinity and humanity of my most holy Son? What excuse can those men give in the last judgment, who have despised this ineffable love and blessing, which they had always present in the holy Church, ready to fill them with the plenitude of his gifts, and who rather sought diversion in worldly pleasures and attended upon the outward and deceitful vanities of this earthly life? Be thou amazed at this insanity as were the holy angels, and guard thyself against falling into the same error.

CHAPTER X.

HUMBLE LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOR.

My daughter, in three virtues mentioned by thee in the foregoing chapter as especially practiced by my Son and Lord, I wish that thou be particularly zealous as his spouse and my beloved disciple. They are the virtues of charity, humility and obedience in which Jesus desired to signalize Himself toward the end of his life. Without doubt He manifested his love for men during his whole life, since He performed for them such admirable works from the very first instant of his conception in my womb. But towards the end of his life, when He established the evangelical law of the New Testament, the fire of ardent love, that burned in his bosom, burst out in more consuming flames. On this last occasion the charity of the Savior for the children of Adam exerted its full force, since it was urged on by the sorrows of death that encompassed Him, and was spurred on from the outside by the dislike of men for suffering, their self-chosen misfortunes and their boundless ingratitude and perversity in seeking to destroy the honor and the life of Him, who was ready to sacrifice all for their eternal happiness. By this conflict his love was inflamed to the point at which it could not be extinguished (Cant. 8, 7); and thus being now about to leave the earth, He was driven to exercise all his ingenuity in attempting to prolong his benefactions and his intercourse with men, leaving among them, by his teachings, works and examples, the sure means of participating in the effects of his divine charity.

In this art of loving thy neighbor for God's sake I wish that thou be very expert and zealous. This thou wilt be, if the very injuries and sufferings with which they afflict thee, shall waken in thee a greater love. Thou must remember, that then alone wilt thou be secure and unwavering, when neither benefits nor flatteries of men have any effect on thee. For to love those who do thee good, is a duty; but if thou art heedless, thou canst not know, whether in that case thou lovest them for God's sake, or for the sake of the benefits they confer, which would be loving thy own advantage or thyself rather than thy neighbor for God's sake. He who loves for other than God's sake or for vain complaisance merely, has not yet learned true charity; since he is yet taken up with the blind love of his own ease. But if thou love those who do not satisfy any of these cravings, thou art led on to love them for the Lord's sake as the principal motive and object of thy love, loving Him in his creatures, whoever they be. Thou must exercise thyself in both the corporal and the spiritual works of mercy; but as thou hast fewer occasions to exercise those of the body than those of the spirit, thou must continually extend thy spiritual works of charity, multiplying, according to the will of thy Savior, thy prayers, petitions, pious practices, accompanying them with prudent and holy admonitions and thus advancing the spiritual welfare of souls. Remember that my Lord and Son conferred no bodily blessings on any one, without accompanying them with spiritual, and it would have been derogatory to the divine perfection of his works, to perform them without this plenitude of goodness. From this thou wilt understand how much we must prefer the benefits of soul to those of the body; hence thou must always seek them in the first place, although earthly-minded men blindly prefer temporal bless-

ings, forgetting the eternal ones and those tending toward the friendship and grace of the Most High.

The virtues of humility and obedience were highly exalted by the conduct of my most holy Son in washing the feet of his Apostles. If by thy interior enlightenment concerning this extraordinary example thou dost not humble thyself to the dust, thy heart is indeed hardened and thou art very obtuse in the knowledge of the Lord. Let it then be understood henceforth, that thou never canst consider or profess thyself sufficiently humbled, even when thou findest thyself despised and trodden under foot by all men, sinners as they are; for they never can be as bad as Judas, or thou as good as thy Lord and Master. But to merit and to be honored by this virtue of humility, will give thee such perfection and worthiness, that thou wilt deserve the name of a spouse of Christ and make thyself somewhat like unto Him. Without this humility no soul can be raised to excellence and communication with the Lord; for the exalted must first be humbled and only the lowly ones can and should be exalted (Matth. 23, 12); and souls are always raised up by the Lord in proportion as they have humiliated themselves.

In order that thou mayest not lose this pearl of humility just at the time when thou thinkest thyself secure of it, remember that the exercise of it is not to be preferred to obedience, nor must thou practice it merely at thy own will, but in subjection to thy superiors; for if thou prefer thy own judgment to that of thy superiors even if thou do it under color of humility, thou art guilty of pride; for that would be not only refusing to seek the lowest place, but placing thyself above thy superior. Hence thou mayest understand the error of shrinking back, like saint Peter, from the favors and blessings of the Lord, depriving thee thereby not only of the gifts and treasures

offered thee, but of the advantage of humility, which thou seekest and which is much preferable. Thou failest also in gratefully acknowledging the high ends and in striving after the exaltation of his holy name, which the Lord seeks in such works. It is not thy business to enter into the examination of his secret and exalted judgments, nor to correct them by thy reasonings and thy objections on account of which thou mightst think thyself unworthy of his favors or incapable of performing the works enjoined. All this is a seed of Lucifer's pride, covered up by apparent humility as he thus seeks to hinder the communications of the Lord, his gifts and his friendship, which thou desirest so much. Let it then be to thee an inviolable rule, that as soon as thy confessors and superiors approve of certain favors and blessings as coming from the Lord, thou accept them as such with due thanks and reverence. Do not allow thyself to be led into new doubts and vacillating fears, but correspond with the favors of the Lord in humble fear and tranquil obedience.

CHAPTER XI.

ADORATION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

O my daughter! Would that the believers in the holy Catholic faith opened their hardened and stony hearts in order to attain to a true understanding of the sacred and mysterious blessing of the holy Eucharist! If they would only detach themselves, root out and reject their earthly inclinations, and, restraining their passions, apply themselves with living faith to study by the divine light their great happiness in thus possessing their eternal God in the holy Sacrament and in being able, by its reception and constant intercourse, to participate in the full effects of this heavenly manna! If they would only worthily esteem this precious gift, begin to taste its sweetness, and share in the hidden power of their omnipotent God! Then nothing would ever be wanting to them in their exile. In this, the happy age of the law of grace, mortals have no reason to complain of their weakness and their passions; since in this bread of heaven they have at hand strength and health. It matters not that they are tempted and persecuted by the demon; for by receiving this Sacrament frequently they are enabled to overcome him gloriously. The faithful are themselves to blame for all their poverty and labors, since they pay no attention to this divine mystery, nor avail themselves of the divine powers, thus placed at their disposal by my most holy Son. I tell thee truly, my dearest, that Lucifer and his demons have such a fear of the most holy Eucharist, that to approach it, causes them more torments than

to remain in hell itself. Although they do enter churches in order to tempt souls, they enter them with aversion, forcing themselves to endure cruel pains in the hope of destroying a soul and drawing it into sin, especially in the holy places and in the presence of the holy Eucharist. Their wrath against the Lord and against the souls alone could induce them to expose themselves to the torment of his real sacramental presence.

Whenever He is carried through the streets they usually fly and disperse in all haste; and they would not dare to approach those that accompany Him, if by their long experience they did not know, that they will induce some to forget the reverence due to their Lord. Therefore they make special efforts to tempt the faithful in the churches; for they know what great injury they can thereby do to the Lord himself, who in his sacramental love is there waiting to sanctify men and to receive the return of his sweetest and untiring love. Hence thou canst also understand the strength of those who prepare themselves to partake of this bread of the angels and how the demons fear the souls, who receive the Lord worthily and devoutly and who strive to preserve themselves in this purity until the next Communion. But there are very few who live with this intention, and the enemy is ceaselessly alert in striving to throw them back into their forgetfulness, distraction and indifference, so that he may not be obliged to encounter such powerful weapons in the hands of men. Write this admonition in thy heart; and since without thy merit the Almighty has ordained, that thou receive holy Communion daily, seek by all possible means to preserve thyself in the good dispositions from one Communion to the other. It is the will of the Lord and my own, that with this sword thou fight the battles of the Almighty in the name of the holy

Church against the invisible enemies. For in our days they are heaping affliction and sorrow upon the mistress of nations, while there is none to console her or to take it to heart (Thren. 1, 10). Do thou thyself weep for the same reason and let thy heart be torn in sorrow. But while the omnipotent and just Judge who is so greatly incensed against the Catholics for having outraged his justice by their unmeasurable and continual transgressions even under the aegis of their grand faith, none are found to consider and weigh the fearful damage, nor to approach the easy remedy of receiving the holy Eucharist with a contrite and humble heart; nor does any one ask for my intercession.

Though all the children of the Church largely incur this fault, yet more to be blamed are the unworthy and wicked priests; for by the irreverence with which they treat the blessed Sacrament the other Catholics have been drawn to undervalue it. If the people see that their priests approach the divine mysteries with holy fear and trembling, they learn to treat and receive their God in like manner. Those that so honor Him shall shine in heaven like the sun among the stars; for the glory of my divine Son's humanity will redound in a special measure in those who have behaved well toward Him in the blessed Sacrament and have received Him with all reverence; whereas this will not happen to those who have not frequented this holy table with devotion. Moreover the devout will bear on their breast, where they have so often harbored the holy Eucharist, most beautiful and resplendent inscriptions, showing that they were most worthy tabernacles of the holy Sacrament. This will be a great accidental reward for them and a source of jubilation and admiration for the holy angels and all the rest of the blessed. They will also enjoy the special

favor of being able to penetrate deeper into the mystery of the presence of the Lord in the sacrament and to understand all the rest of the wonders hidden therein. This will be such a privilege, that it alone would suffice for their eternal happiness, even if there were no other enjoyment in heaven. Moreover the essential glory of those, who have worthily and devoutly received the holy Eucharist, will in several respects exceed the glory of many martyrs who have not received the body and blood of the Lord.

I wish thee also to hear, my dearest daughter, from my own mouth, what were my sentiments when in mortal life I was about to receive holy Communion. In order that thou mayest better understand what I say, reflect on all I have commanded thee to write about my gifts, merits and labors in life. I was preserved from original sin and, at the instant of my Conception, I received the knowledge and vision of the Divinity, as thou hast often recorded. I knew more than all the saints; I surpassed the highest seraphim in love; I never committed any fault; I constantly practiced all the virtues in a heroic degree and in the least of them I was greater than all the saints in their highest perfection; the intention and object of my actions were most exalted and my habits and gifts were noble without measure; I imitated my most holy Son most closely; I labored most faithfully; I suffered with eagerness and co-operated with the doings of the Lord exactly as was becoming to me; I ceased not to exercise my love and gain new and supereminent merits of grace. Yet I thought myself to have been fully repaid by being allowed to receive Him even once in the holy Eucharist; yea, I did not consider myself worthy of this one favor. Reflect then what should be thy sentiments, and those of the rest of

the children of Adam, on being admitted to the reception of this admirable Sacrament. And if for the greatest of saints one holy Communion is a superabundant reward, what must the priests and the faithful think, when they are allowed to receive it so frequently? Open thy eyes in the deep darkness and blindness which overwhelm men around thee, and raise them up to the divine brightness in order to understand these mysteries. Look upon all thy works as insufficient, all thy sufferings as most insignificant, all thy thanksgiving as falling far short of what thou owest for such an exquisite blessing as that of possessing in the holy Church, Christ my divine Son, present in the holy Sacrament in order to enrich all the faithful. If thou hast not wherewith to show thy thanks for this and the other blessings which thou receivest, at least humiliate thyself to the dust and remain prostrate upon it; confess thyself unworthy in all the sincerity of thy heart. Magnify the Most High, bless and praise Him, preserving thyself at all times worthy to receive Him and to suffer many martyrdoms in return for such a favor.

CHAPTER XII.

PREDESTINATION OF SOULS.

My daughter, all that thou hast understood and written in this chapter will serve as a most potent incentive to thee and to all the mortals who will consider it carefully. Estimate then, and weigh within thy soul, how important is the eternal predestination or reprobation of the souls, since my most holy Son looked upon it with such great anxiety, that the difficulty or impossibility of saving all men added such immense bitterness to the Death, which He was about to suffer for all. By this conflict He manifests to us the importance and gravity of the matter under consideration, He prolonged his supplications and prayers to his eternal Father and his love for men caused his most precious blood to ooze forth from his body on perceiving, that the malice of men would make them unworthy of participation in the benefits of his Death. The Lord my Son has indeed justified his cause in thus having lavished his love and his merits without measure for the purchase of man's salvation; and likewise the eternal Father has justified Himself in presenting to the world such a remedy and in having made it possible for each one freely to reach out for such widely different lots, as death and life, fire and water (Eccli. 1, 71).

But what pretense or excuse will men advance for having forgotten their own eternal salvation, when my divine Son and I have desired and sought to procure it for them with such sacrifices and untiring watchful-

ness? None of the mortals will have any excuse for their foolish negligence, and much less will the children of the holy Church have an excuse, since they have received the faith of these admirable sacraments and yet show in their lives little difference from that of infidels and pagans. Do not think, my daughter, that it is written in vain: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matth. 20, 16): fear this sentence and renew in thy heart the care and zeal for thy salvation, conformable to the sense of obligation arising from the knowledge of such high mysteries. Even if it were not a question of eternal salvation for thee, thou shouldst correspond to the loving kindness with which I manifest to thee such great and divine secrets. That I call thee my daughter and a spouse of my Lord, should cause thee to pay no attention to any visible thing and embrace only love and suffering for his sake. This I have shown thee by my example, since I applied all my faculties continually to these two things with the highest perfection. In order that thou mayest attain this, I wish that thy prayer be without intermission and that thou watch one hour with me, that is during the whole of thy life; for, compared with eternity, life is less than one hour, yea less than one moment. With such sentiments I wish that thou follow up the mysteries of the Passion, writing them, feeling them and imprinting them upon thy heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

VALUE OF TRIBULATIONS.

My daughter, in all that thou art made to understand and write concerning these mysteries, thou drawest upon thyself (and upon mortals) a severe judgment, if thou dost not overcome thy pusillanimity, ingratitude and baseness by meditating day and night on the Passion and Death of Jesus crucified. This is the great science of the saints, so little heeded by the worldly; it is the bread of life and the spiritual food of the little ones, which gives wisdom to them and the want of which starves the lovers of this proud world (Wis. 15, 3). In this science I wish thee to be studious and wise, for with it thou canst buy thyself all good things (Wis. 7, 11). My Son and Lord taught us this science when He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no one cometh to my Father except through Me" (John 14, 6). Tell me then, my daughter: if my Lord and Master has made Himself the life and the way for men through his Passion and Death, is it not evident that in order to go that way and live up to this truth, they must follow Christ crucified, afflicted, scourged and affronted? Consider the ignorance of men who wish to come to the Father without following Christ, since they expect to reign with God without suffering or imitating his Passion, yea without even a thought of accepting any part of his suffering and Death, or of thanking Him for it. They want it to procure for them the pleasures of this life as well as of eternal life, while Christ their Creator

has suffered the most bitter pains and torments in order to enter heaven and to show them by his example how they are to find the way of light.

Eternal rest is incompatible with the shame of not having duly labored for its attainment. He is not a true son of his father, who does not imitate him, nor he a good disciple, who does not follow his Master, nor he a good servant, who does not accompany his lord; nor do I count him a devoted child, who does not suffer with me and my divine Son. But our love for the eternal salvation of men obliges us, who see them forgetful of this truth and so adverse to suffering, to send them labors and punishments, so that if they do not freely welcome them, they may at least be forced to undergo them and so be enabled to enter upon the way of salvation. And yet even all this is insufficient, since their inclinations and their blind love of visible things detains them and makes them hard and heavy of heart; they rob them of remembrance and affection toward these higher things, which might raise them above themselves and above created things. Hence it comes, that men do not find joy in their tribulations, nor rest in their labors, nor consolation in their sorrows, nor any peace in adversities. For, altogether different from the saints who glory in tribulation as the fulfillment of their most earnest desires, they desire none of it and abhor all that is painful. In many of the faithful this ignorance goes still farther; for some of them expect to be distinguished by God's most intimate love, others, to be pardoned without penance, others, to be highly favored. Nothing of all this will they attain, because they do not ask in the name of Christ the Lord and because they do not wish to imitate Him and follow Him in his Passion.

Therefore, my daughter, embrace the Cross and do not admit any consolation outside of it in this mortal life. By contemplating and feeling within thyself the sacred Passion thou wilt attain the summit of perfection and attain the love of a spouse. Bless and magnify my most holy Son for the love with which He delivered Himself up for the salvation of mankind. Little do mortals heed this mystery; but I, as an Eyewitness, assure thee, next to ascending to the right hand of his eternal Father, nothing was so highly estimated and so earnestly desired by Him, as to offer Himself for suffering and death and to deliver Himself up entirely to his enemies. I wish also that thou lament with great sorrow the fact that Judas, in his malice and treachery, has many more followers than Christ. Many are the infidels, many the bad Catholics, many the hypocrites, who under the name of a Christian, sell and deliver Him and wish to crucify Him anew. Bewail all these evils, which thou understandest and knowest, in order that thou mayest imitate and follow me in this matter.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FEAR OF DAMNATION.

My daughter, thou art astonished, not without cause, at what thou hast learned and recorded of the unhappy fate of Judas and of the fall of the Apostles, who were all disciples in the school of Christ, nursed at his breast by his doctrine, by the example of his life, and by his miracles, enjoying his sweetest and gentlest intercourse, and many other benefits of my assistance and intercession. But I truly say to thee, if all the children of the Church would attentively consider this example, they would find a salutary exhortation and warning in this mortal state of life against the danger surrounding them even in the midst of the favors and blessings they continually receive at the hands of the Lord. All of them cannot be equal to seeing Him with bodily eyes and having intercourse with Him as the living image of all sanctity. The Apostles received from me personal exhortations and they were eye-witnesses of my blameless and holy conduct; they received great tokens of my kindness and my charity flowed directly from God through me upon them. If they, in the very act of receiving such favors and in the very presence of their God and Savior, forgot all of them and all of their obligation of corresponding to them: who then shall be so presumptuous in this mortal life as not to fear the danger of eternal ruin, no matter how many favors he has received from the Almighty? They were Apostles chosen by their divine Master, their true God; yet one of them

fell lower than any other individual of the human race; and the others failed in faith, the foundation of all virtue. Yet all this was conformable to the just judgments of the Most High. Why then should those who are not Apostles, be without fear, who have not so labored in the school of Christ and who have not so merited my intercession?

Concerning the perdition of Judas and of his most just punishment thou hast written enough in order to set forth to what extremes a man can be brought by yielding to vices and to the devil, and by refusing to hear and follow the pleading of grace. I moreover inform thee, that not only the torments of the traitorous disciple Judas, but also those of many other Christians, who condemn themselves and shall be sent to the same place of punishment, which was assigned to them and Judas from the beginning of the world, are greater than the torments of many demons. For my most holy Son did not die for the angels, but for men; nor were the fruits and results of the Redemption for the demon, but entirely at the disposal of the children of the Church in the holy Sacraments. The contempt for these incomparable benefits is not properly the sin of the devils, but of the Christians; and therefore they must expect a special and appropriate punishment for this contempt. The mistake of not having recognized Christ as the true God causes the deepest and most tormenting regret to Lucifer and his evil spirits for all eternity. Hence, on account of this error, they are filled with special wrath against those that were redeemed, particularly against the Christians, who derived the greatest benefits from the Redemption and the blood of the Lamb. That is why the devils are so eager to cause forgetfulness and misuse of these graces in them and why afterwards in

hell, they are permitted to vent so much the greater fury and wrath upon the wicked Christians. If it were not for the equitable dispositions of divine justice by which the pains are proportioned to the guilt, they would wreck still fiercer vengeance upon them. But the goodness of the Lord extends even to this place and restrains the malice of the demons by his infinite power and wisdom.

In the fall of the other eleven Apostles, I wish, my dearest, that thou learn the frailty of human nature, since even in such great blessings and favors received of the Lord, it easily falls into the habit of gross negligence and ingratitude, such as the Apostles manifested in flying from their heavenly Master and leaving Him in a spirit of doubt. Men incur this danger from their earthly and sensuous inclinations, the result of past sins and of the habits formed by a terrestrial, carnal and sensuous life, void of spirituality. On account of it they desire and love the divine favors and benefits only in a carnal manner. As soon as they fail to find that kind of enjoyment in them, they turn to other sensible enjoyments, are moved by them and lose the true conception of a spiritual life; for they treat it and estimate it according to the low standard of mere sensuality. Hence the Apostles, though they were so greatly favored by my most holy Son, fell into such gross heedlessness and sins; for the miracles, the teachings and the examples affected them only in a sensible manner; and as they, in spite of their being raised to justice and perfection, permitted themselves to be affected by them only outwardly, they were presently disturbed by temptation and yielded to it. They acted like men who had done little to penetrate into the mysteries and into the spirit of what they had seen and heard in the school of their Master. By this example, my daughter, and by my teachings thou

oughtest to be well instructed, a spiritual disciple of mine, and not a terrestrial, accustoming thyself to despise mere outwardness, even in favors bestowed upon thee by the Lord or myself. When thou receivest them, do not attach thyself merely to the material or sensible in them, but raise thy mind to the exalted and the spiritual contained therein; to that which is perceived by the interior and spiritual, and not by the animal senses (I Cor. 2, 14). If even the merely sensible can hinder the spiritual life, how much is this true of that which pertains altogether to earthly, animal and carnal life? Clearly I desire of thee to forget and blot out of thy faculties all images and remembrances of mere creatures in order that thou mayest be fit to receive my salutary teaching and be capable of imitating me.

CHAPTER XV.

HYPOCRISY.

My daughter, to great deeds art thou called and invited on account of the divine enlightenment thou receivest concerning the mysteries of the sufferings of my most holy Son and of myself for the human race, and on account of the knowledge which thou hast obtained concerning the small return made by heartless and ungrateful men for all our pains. Thou livest yet in mortal flesh and art thyself subject to this ignorance and weakness; but by the force of truth thou art now roused to great wonder, sorrow and compassion at the want of attention displayed by mortals toward these great sacraments and at the losses sustained by them through their lukewarmness and negligence. What then are the thoughts of the angels and saints, and what are my thoughts in beholding this world and all the faithful in such a dangerous and dreadful state of carelessness, when they have the Passion and Death of my divine Son before their eyes, and when they have me, for their Mother and Intercessor and his most pure life and mine for an example? I tell thee truly, my dearest, only my intercession and the merits of his Son, which I offer to the eternal Father, can delay the punishment and placate his wrath, can retard the destruction of the world and the severe chastisement of the children of the Church, who know his will and fail to fulfill it (John 15, 15). But I am much incensed to find so few who condole with me and try to console my Son in his sorrows, as David

says (Ps. 68, 21). This hardness of heart will cause great confusion to them on the day of judgment; since they will then see with irreparable sorrow, not only that they were ungrateful, but inhuman and cruel toward my divine Son, toward me and toward themselves.

Consider then thy duty, my dearest, and raise thyself above all earthly things and above thyself; for I am calling thee and choose thee to imitate and follow me into the solitude, in which I am left by creatures, whom my Son and I have pursued with so many blessings and favors. Weigh in thy heart, how much it cost my Lord to reconcile mankind to the eternal Father (Colos. 1, 22) and regain for them his friendship. Weep and afflict thyself that so many should live in such forgetfulness and that so many should labor with all their might at destroying and losing what was bought by the blood of God itself and all that I from the first moment of my Conception have sought to procure and am procuring for their salvation. Awaken in thy heart the deepest grief, that in his holy Church there should be many followers of the hypocritical and sacrilegious priests who, under cover of a false piety, still condemn Christ; that pride and sumptuousness with other grave vices should be raised to authority and exalted, while humility, truth, justice and all virtues be so oppressed and debased and avarice and vanity should prevail. Few know the poverty of Christ, and fewer embrace it. Holy faith is hindered and is not spread among the nations on account of the boundless ambition of the mighty of this earth; in many Catholics it is inactive and dead; and whatever should be living, is near to death and to eternal perdition. The counsels of the Gospel are forgotten, its precepts trodden under foot, charity almost extinct. My son and true God offers his cheeks in patience and meekness to be buffeted and wounded (Thren.

3, 30). Who pardons an insult for the sake of imitating Him? Just the contrary is set up as law in this world, not only by the infidels, but by the very children of the faith and of light.

In recognizing these sins I desire that thou imitate me in what I did during the Passion and during my whole life, namely practice the virtues opposed to these vices. As a recompense for their blasphemies, I blessed God; for their oaths, I praised Him; for their unbelief, I excited acts of faith, and so for all the rest of the sins committed. This is what I desire thee to do while living in this world. Fly also the dangerous intercourse with creatures, taught by the example of Peter, for thou art not stronger than he, the Apostle of Christ; and if thou fall in thy weakness, weep over thy fault and immediately seek my intercession. Make up for thy ordinary faults and weaknesses by thy patience in adversities, accept them with a joyous mien and without disturbance, no matter what they may be, whether they be sickness or the molestations coming from creatures, or whether they arise from the opposition of the flesh to the spirit, or from the conflicts with visible or invisible enemies. In all these things canst thou suffer and must thou bear up in faith, hope and magnanimous sentiment. I remind thee, that there is no exercise more profitable and useful for the soul than to suffer: for suffering gives light, undeceives, detaches the heart from visible things and raises it up to the Lord. He will come to meet those in suffering, because He is with the afflicted and sends to them his protection and help (Ps. 40, 15).

CHAPTER XVI.

WORLDLY PURSUITS.

My daughter, the mysterious sacrament of the patience of my Son, by which He bore all the affronts and insults, is a sealed book, which can be opened and understood only by the divine light. Thou hast come to the knowledge of it, as it has been partly laid open for thee, although on account of thy limited powers, thou writest much less than thou hast seen. But as this mystery is being made clear and intelligible to thee in the secret of thy heart, I wish that it be also written there and that thou study by this living example that divine science, which neither flesh nor blood can teach thee. For the world does not know, nor does it merit to know, this science. This philosophy consists in recognizing and loving the happy lot of the poor, the humble, the afflicted, the despised, and those unknown among the children of vanity. This school my most holy and loving Son established in his Church, when He proclaimed and set up the eight beatitudes (Matth. 5, 2-10). Afterwards, when He himself assumed all the sufferings of his Passion, He became for us a Teacher, who practices what He teaches, as thou hast seen. Nevertheless, although this is set before the eyes of the Catholics, and can be plainly read by them in this book of life during their whole earthly pilgrimage, there are but few and scattered souls who enter into this school and study this book, while countless are the wayward and foolish, who ignore this science in their unwillingness to be taught.

All abhor poverty and thirst after riches, none of them being willing to recognize their emptiness. Infinite

is the number of those who are carried away by their anger and vengeance, despising meekness. Few deplore their real miseries and struggle merely for terrestrial consolations; scarcely any love justice, or loyally pursue it in their dealings with the neighbors. Mercy is almost extinct, purity of heart is sullied and infringed upon, peace is constrained. None grant pardon, none wish to suffer for justice's sake, yea not even the least of the many torments and pains, which they have so justly merited. Thus, my dearest, there are few who attain the blessings promised by my divine Son and by me. Many times the just indignation and anger of the Almighty is roused against the professors of the true faith; since in the very sight of the living example of their Master, they live almost like infidels; many of them being even more abominable in their lives; for they are properly those who despise the fruits of the Redemption, which they have come to know and confess. In the land of saints they impiously perform the works of wickedness (Is. 26, 10), and make themselves unworthy of the remedies, which are put at their disposal in more merciful abundance.

Of thee I desire, my daughter, that thou labor valiantly for this blessedness, by seeking to imitate me perfectly according to thy grace of so deeply understanding this doctrine, which is hidden from the prudent and wise of this world (Mark 11, 25). Day for day I manifest to thee new secrets of my wisdom, in order that it may be established in thy heart and thou mayest extend thy hands to valiant deeds (Prov. 31, 19). And now I will tell thee of an exercise which I practiced and which thou canst imitate to a certain degree. Thou knowest already, that from the very first instant of my Conception I was full of grace, without the least stain or mar-

icipation of the least effect of original sin. On account of this singular privilege I was blessed in all the virtues, without feeling any repugnance or opposition in the exercise of them, and without being conscious of owing satisfaction for any sins of my own. Nevertheless the divine enlightenment taught me, that I was a Daughter of Adam by nature, which in him had sinned, and therefore I felt bound to humiliate myself to the very dust, even though I shared none of the guilt of that sin. And since I also possessed senses of the same kind as those, through which sin and its effects were contracted and which then and afterwards are operative in present human conditions, I thought myself obliged to mortify them, humiliate them and deprive them of the enjoyment proper to their nature, simply on account of this my parentage from Adam. I acted like a most faithful daughter of a family, who assumes the debt of her father and of her brothers as her own, though she had no share in contracting it, and who strives to pay and satisfy for it the more earnestly, the more she loves her family and the more they are unable to satisfy and free themselves from it, not giving herself any rest until she succeeds. This have I done with all the human race, whose miseries and transgressions I bewailed. Because I was a Daughter of Adam I mortified in me the senses and faculties with which he sinned, and I humiliated myself as one that had fallen and one guilty of his sin and disobedience, though I was entirely free from them. All this I did not only for Adam, but for all who by nature are my brethren. Thou canst not imitate me under like conditions, since thou art a partaker in his sin and guilt. But I herewith impose upon thee to labor without ceasing for thyself and for thy neighbor, and to humiliate thyself to the very dust; since a contrite and humble heart draws down mercy from the divine goodness.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOSS OF SOULS.

My daughter, it is written in the holy Gospels (John 5, 57) that the eternal Father has given to his only Son and mine the power to judge and condemn the reprobate on the last day, the day of universal judgment. This was eminently proper, not only in order that all the sinners may see their Judge, who will sentence them according to the most just will of God; but also in order that they may behold and recognize his humanity, by which they were redeemed, and be confronted in it with the torments and injuries it suffered in order to rescue them from eternal damnation. The same Judge and Lord, who shall judge them, shall also advance the charge. As they cannot answer or satisfy for the crimes with which He charges them, their confusion will be only the beginning of the eternal torments, which they merit by their obstinate ingratitude; for then shall become evident to all the world the greatness of his most merciful and kind Redemption and the justice of their damnation. Great was the sorrow, most bitter the grief, of my most holy Son, that not all should make use of the fruits of his Redemption. This same thought also pierced my heart and immensely added to the sorrow of seeing Him spit upon, buffeted, and blasphemed more cruelly than can ever be understood by living man. But I understood all these sufferings clearly and as they should be understood; therefore my sorrow was great in proportion to this knowledge, just as it was also the

measure of my reverence and love of the person of Christ, my Son and Lord. But next to this sorrow, my greatest one was to know, that after all these death-dealing sufferings of the Lord, so many men should still damn themselves even within sight of all the infinite treasures of grace.

I wish that thou imitate and follow me in this sorrow and that thou lament this fearful misfortune; for among all the losses sustained by men, there is none which deserves to be so deplored, nor which can ever be compared to it. My Son and I look with especial love upon those who imitate this sorrow and afflict themselves on account of the perdition of so many souls. Seek thou, my dearest, to distinguish thyself in this exercise and continue to pray: for thou canst scarcely imagine how acceptable are such prayers to the Almighty. But remember his promise, that those who pray shall receive (Luke 11, 9), and that to those who knock the gates of his infinite treasures shall be opened. In order that thou mayest have something to offer in return, write into thy heart, what my most holy Son and thy Spouse suffered at the hands of those vile and depraved men, and the invincible patience, meekness and silence with which He submitted to their wicked whims. With this example, labor from now on, that no anger, nor any other passion of a daughter of Adam have any sway over thee. Let an interior and ever active horror of pride, and a dread of injuring thy neighbor, be engendered in thy bosom. Solicitously ask the Lord for patience, meekness, and peacefulness and for a love of sufferings and Christ's Cross. Embrace this Cross with a pious affection and follow Christ thy Spouse, in order that thou mayest at last possess Him (Matth. 16, 14).

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE POISON OF SIN.

My daughter, great is the neglect and the inattention of men in failing to consider the works of my most holy Son and to penetrate with humble reverence the mysteries which He has concealed within them for the salvation of all. But many do not know, and others are astonished, that the Lord should have consented to be presented as a criminal before iniquitous judges and be examined by them as a wicked malefactor; that they should have been allowed to treat Him as an ignorant fool; and that He should not have made use of his divine wisdom to defend his innocence, convict the Jews and all his enemies of their malice, since He could so easily have done it. But these sentiments of wonder should be especially united to a deep veneration for the judgments of the Lord, who disposed all things connected with the Redemption according to his equity, goodness and rectitude and in a manner befitting all his attributes, denying none of his enemies sufficient help to follow the good, if only they wished to use their freedom for that purpose. He wished all of them to be saved (I Tim. 2, 4), and if not all of them attained this salvation, no one can justly complain of his superabundant kindness.

But besides this, I wish, my dearest, that thou understand the instructive lessons contained in these works; for in each one of them my Son acted as Redeemer and Teacher of men. In the silence and the

meekness, which He maintained during his Passion, permitting Himself to be reputed as a wicked and foolish man, He left to mankind a lesson just as important as it is unnoticed and unpracticed by the children of Adam. Because they do not heed the contagion of Lucifer through sin, which is perpetuated in the world, they do not seek in the Physician the medicine of suffering, which the Lord in his immense charity has left to the world in word and deed. Let men then consider themselves conceived in sin (Ps. 50, 7), and let them realize how strong has grown in them the hellish seed of pride, of presumption, vanity, self-esteem, avarice, hypocrisy, deceitfulness, and all other vices. Each one ordinarily seeks to advance his honor and vainglory, struggling to be applauded and renowned. The learned and those who think themselves wise, wish to be applauded and looked up to, bragging about their knowledge. The unlearned try to appear wise. The rich glory in their riches and wish to be respected on their account. The poor strive to be and appear rich, anxious to gain the approbation of the wealthy. The powerful seek to be feared, worshipped and obeyed. All of them are pursuing the same deceit of seeking to appear what they are not in fact, and fail in reality to come up to what they appear to be. They palliate their faults, extol their virtues and abilities, they attribute to themselves the goods and the blessings as if they had not received them from God. They receive them as if they were their due and not owing to his liberal kindness; instead of being thankful for them they abuse them as weapons against God and against their own selves. Commonly all are swollen up by the mortal poison of the serpent and so much the more anxious to drink it, the more deeply they are already wounded and weakened by his lament-

able assaults. The way of the cross and imitation of Christ in humble Christian sincerity is deserted, because they are so few that walk upon it.

In order to crush the head of Lucifer and overcome pride and arrogance, my Son observed this patient silence in his Passion, permitting Himself to be treated as an ignorant and foolish criminal. As the Teacher of this philosophy and as the Physician of the sickness of sin, He would not deny the charges nor defend or justify Himself, nor refute those who accused Him, showing us by his own living example, how to oppose and counteract the intentions of the serpent. In the Lord was that teaching of the wise man put into practice: More precious is a little foolishness in its time than wisdom and glory (Eccles. 10, 1); for it is better that human frailty be at times considered ignorant and wicked, than that it make a vain show of virtue and wisdom. Infinite is the number of those who are entangled in this dangerous error, who, desiring to appear wise, speak much and multiply words like the foolish (Eccles. 1, 14). They only lose what they strive so much to attain, since they become known as foolish. All these vices arise from the pride rooted in human nature. But do thou, my daughter, preserve the doctrine of my divine Son and that which comes from me. Abhor human ostentation, suffer in silence and let the world consider thee ignorant; for it does not know where true wisdom dwells.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FALL OF THE DEVOUT.

My daughter, in what thou hast written and understood, I see thee astonished to find, that Pilate and Herod exhibited less unkindness and cruelty in the death of my divine Son than the priests, highpriests and pharisees; and thou dwellest much upon the fact that those were secular and gentile judges, while these were teachers of the law and priests of the people of Israel, professing the true faith. In answer to thy thoughts I will remind thee of a doctrine not new, which thou hast understood on former occasions; but I wish that thou refresh it in thy mind and remember it for the rest of thy life. Know then, my dearest, that a fall from the highest position is extremely dangerous and the damage done is either irreparable, or very difficult of redress. Lucifer held an eminent position in heaven, as regards both natural gifts and gifts of grace; for in beauty he excelled all the creatures, and by his sin he fell to the deepest abyss of loathsomeness and misery and into a more hardened obstinacy than all his followers. The first parents of the human race, Adam and Eve, were exalted to the highest dignity and raised to exquisite favor, as coming forth from the hand of the Almighty: their fall caused perdition to themselves and to all their posterity, and faith teaches what was the cost of their salvation. To restore them and their posterity was the work of an infinite mercy.

Many other souls have reached the heights of

perfection and have thence fallen most unfortunately, arriving at a state in which they almost despaired or found themselves incapable of rising. This sad state in the creature originates from many causes. The first is the dismay and boundless confusion of one who feels that he has fallen from an exalted state of virtue; for he knows that he has not only lost great blessings, but he does not expect to obtain greater ones than those of the past and those he has lost; nor does he promise himself more firmness in keeping those he can obtain through renewed efforts, than he has shown in those acquired and now lost through his ingratitude. From this dangerous distrust originates lukewarmness, want of fervor and diligence, absence of zeal and devotion; since diffidence extinguishes all these in the soul, just as the sprightliness of ardent hope overcomes many difficulties, strengthens and vivifies weak human creatures to undertake great works. Another obstacle there is, not less formidable, namely: the souls accustomed to the blessings of God, either through their office, as the priests and religious, or by the exercise of virtues and the abundance of divine favors, as spiritual minded persons, usually aggravate their sins by a certain contempt of these very blessings and a certain abuse of the divine things. For by the abundance of the divine favors they fall into a dangerous dullness of mind. They begin to think little of the divine favors and become irreverent. Thus failing to co-operate with God's grace, they hinder its effect. They lose the grace of holy fear of the Lord, which arouses and stimulates the will to obey the divine commandments and to be alert in the avoidance of sin and pursuit of eternal life in the friendship of God. This is an evident danger for lukewarm priests, who frequent the holy Eucharist and other Sacraments, without fear

and reverence; also for the learned and wise, and the powerful of this world, who so reluctantly correct and amend their lives. They have lost the appreciation and veneration of the remedial helps of the Church, namely, the Sacraments, preaching and instruction. Thus these medicines, which for other sinners are so salutary and counteract ignorance, weaken those who are the physicians of the spiritual life.

There are other reasons for this kind of danger, which must be referred to the Lord himself. For the sins of those souls who, by their state or by their advanced virtues, are more closely bound to their God, are weighed in the balance of God's justice in quite a different way from the sins of those who have been less favored by his mercy. Although the sins of all are more or less essentially the same, yet the circumstances of sin are very different. For the priests and teachers, the powerful and the dignitaries, and those who, on account of their station or by reputation, are supposed to be advanced in a holy life, cause great scandal by their fall or by any sins they commit. There is much more of bold disrespect in their presumption and temerity against God, whom they know better and to whom they owe much more, but whom they offend with more deliberation and knowledge than the ignorant. Hence, as is evident from the tenor of all the holy Scriptures, the sins of Catholics, and especially of those that are instructed and enlightened, are so displeasing to God. As the term of each man's life is preordained for each one as the time in which he is to gain the eternal reward, so the measure or number of sins to be borne by the patience or forbearance of the Lord is likewise preordained. This measure of divine justice is determined not only by the number and quantity of the sins, but

also by their quality and weight. Thus it may happen, that in the souls favored by greater enlightenment and graces of heaven, the grievousness supplies what is wanting in the number of the sins, and that with fewer sins they are forsaken sooner and chastised more severely than others with many more sins. Nor can all expect for themselves the same issue as David (II Reg. 12, 13) and saint Peter; because not all of them have to their credit as many good actions to be remembered by the Lord. Besides the special privileges of some cannot be set up as a rule for all others; because, according to the secret judgments of the Lord, not all are destined for a special office.

By this explanation, my dearest, thou wilt be able to satisfy thy doubts and thou wilt understand what a bitter evil so many souls incur, whom the Almighty has redeemed by his blood, placed in the way of light and drawn toward Himself; and how some persons can fall from a more exalted state into more perverse obstinacy than others below them in station. This truth is well illustrated in the mystery of my Son's Passion, in which the priests, scribes and the whole people, who were much more indebted to their God than the heathens, who knew not of the true religion. I desire that this truth, as exhibited by their example, convince thee of this terrible danger and excite in thee holy fear. And with this fear join humble thanks and an exalted esteem of the favors of the Lord. In the days of abundance, be not unmindful of the hour of want (Eccli. 13, 25). Ponder as well the one as the other within thyself, and remember that thou carriest thy treasure in a fragile vessel, which thou canst easily lose (II Cor. 4, 7). Know well, that the reception of such blessings argues not merit, and the possession of them is not due to thee in justice, but comes

to thee by liberality and kindness. That the Most High has favored thee with so much familiar intercourse is no assurance that thou canst not fall, and no license to live carelessly and without reverence and fear. All things happen to thee according to the number and greatness of thy blessings; for the wrath of the serpent has increased toward thee in proportion, and is more alert against thee than against other souls. He has become aware that the Most High has not been so liberally loving to men of many generations as toward thee, and if thou meet so many blessings and mercies with ingratitude, thou shalt be most wretched and worthy of a rigorous punishment, against which thou canst make no objection.

CHAPTER XX.

PERSECUTIONS.

My daughter, thou reflectest with wonder upon the hardness and malice of the Jews, the weakness of Pilate, who knew of their evil dispositions and permitted himself to be overcome, though fully convinced of the innocence of my Son and Lord. I wish to relieve thee of this astonishment by furnishing thee with instructions and warnings suitable for making thee careful on the path to eternal life. Know then that the ancient prophecies concerning the mysteries of the Redemption and all the holy Scriptures were to be infallibly fulfilled; for sooner shall heaven and earth fall to pieces, than that their words fail of their effect as determined in the divine Mind (Matth. 24, 35; Acts 3, 18). In order that the most ignominious death foretold for my Lord should be brought about (Sap. 2, 20; Jer. 11, 19) it was necessary that He should be persecuted by men. But that these men should happen to be the Jews, the priests and the unjust Pilate, was their own misfortune, not the choice of the Almighty, who wishes to save all (I Tim. 2, 4). Their own wickedness and malice brought them to their ruin; for they resisted the great grace of having in their midst their Redeemer and Master, of knowing Him, of conversing with Him, of hearing his doctrine and preaching, of witnessing his miracles; and they had received such great favors, as none of the ancient Patriarchs had attained by all their longings (Matth. 13, 7). Hence the cause of the Savior was justified. He manifestly had cultivated his vineyard by his own hands

and showered his favors upon it (Matth. 21, 33). But it brought Him only thorns and briars, and its keepers took away His life, refusing to recognize Him, as was their opportunity and their duty before all other men.

This same, which happened in the head Christ the Lord and Son of God, must happen to all the members of his mystical body, that is, to the just and predestined to the end of the world. For it would be monstrous to see the members incongruous with the Head, the children show no relation with the Father, or the disciples unlike their Master. Although sinners must always exist (Matth. 18, 7), since in this world the just shall always be mingled with the unjust, the predestined with the reprobate, the persecutors with the persecuted, the murderers with the murdered, the afflicting with the afflicted; yet these lots are decided by the malice and the goodness of men. Unhappy shall be he, through whom scandal comes into the world and who thus makes himself an instrument of the demon. This kind of activity was begun in the new Church by the priests and pharisees, and by Pilate, who all persecuted the Head of this mystic body and, in the further course of the world, by all those who persecute its members, the saints and the predestined, imitating and following the Jews and the devil in their evil work.

Think well, then, my dearest, which of these lots thou wishest to choose in the sight of my Son and me. If thou seest thy Redeemer, thy Spouse and thy Chief tormented, afflicted, crowned with thorns and saturated with reproaches and at the same time desirest to **have a** part in Him and be a member of his mystical body, it is not becoming, or even possible, that thou live steeped in the pleasures of the flesh. Thou must be the persecuted and not a persecutor, the oppressed and not the oppressor;

the one that bears the cross, that encounters the scandal, and not that gives it; the one that suffers, and at the same time makes none of the neighbors suffer. On the contrary, thou must exert thyself for their conversion and salvation in as far as is compatible with the perfection of thy state and vocation. This is the portion of the friends of God and the inheritance of his children in mortal life; in this consists the participation in grace and glory, which by his torments and reproaches and by his death of the Cross my Son and Lord has purchased for them. I too have co-operated in this work and have paid the sorrows and afflictions, which thou hast understood and which I wish thou shalt never allow to be blotted out from my inmost memory. The Almighty would indeed have been powerful enough to exalt his predestined in this world, to give them riches and favors beyond those of others, to make them strong as lions for reducing the rest of mankind to their invincible power. But it was inopportune to exalt them in this manner, in order that men might not be led into the error of thinking that greatness consists in what is visible and happiness in earthly goods; lest, being induced to forsake virtues and obscure the glory of the Lord, they fail to experience the efficacy of divine grace and cease to aspire toward spiritual and eternal things. This is the science which I wish thee to study continually and in which thou must advance day by day, putting into practice all that thou learnest to understand and know.

CHAPTER XXI.

DANGERS OF A LIFE OF EASE AND AFFLUENCE.

I desire that the fruit of the obedience with which thou writest the history of my life shall be, that thou become a true disciple of my most holy Son and of myself. The main purpose of the exalted and venerable mysteries, which are made known to thee, and of the teachings, which I so often repeat to thee, is that thou deny and strip thyself, estranging thy heart from all affection to creatures, neither wishing to possess them nor accept them for other uses. By this precaution thou wilt overcome the impediments, which the devils seek to place in the way of the dangerous softness of thy nature. I who know thee, thus advise and lead thee by the way of instruction and correction as thy Mother and Instructress. By the divine teaching thou knowest the mysteries of the Passion and Death of Christ and the one true way of life, which is the Cross; and thou knowest that not all who are called, are chosen. Many there are who wish to follow Christ and very few who truly dispose themselves to imitate Him; for as soon as they feel the sufferings of the Cross they cast it aside. Laborious exertions are very painful and averse to human nature according to the flesh; and the fruits of the spirit are more hidden and few guide themselves by the light. On this account there are so many among mortals, who, forgetful of the eternal truths, seek the flesh and the continual indulgence of its pleasures. They ardently seek honors and fly from injuries: they strive after riches, and contemn poverty; they long after pleas-

ure and dread mortification. All these are enemies of the Cross of Christ (Phil. 3, 18), and with dreadful aversion they fly from it, deeming it sheer ignominy, just like those who crucified Christ, the Lord.

Another deceit has spread through the world: many imagine that they are following Christ their Master, though they neither suffer affliction nor engage in any exertion or labor. They are content with avoiding boldness in committing sins, and place all their perfection in a certain prudence or hollow self-love, which prevents them from denying anything to their will and from practicing any virtues at the cost of their flesh. They would easily escape this deception, if they would consider that my Son was not only the Redeemer, but their Teacher; and that He left in this world the treasures of his Redemption not only as a remedy against its eternal ruin, but as a necessary medicine for the sickness of sin in human nature. No one knew so much as my Son and Lord; no one could better understand the quality of love than the divine Lord, who was and is wisdom and charity itself; and no one was more able to fulfill all his wishes (I John 4, 16). Nevertheless, although He well could do it, He chose not a life of softness and ease for the flesh, but one full of labors and pains; for He judged his instructions to be incomplete and insufficient to redeem man, if He failed to teach them how to overcome the demon, the flesh and their own self. He wished to inculcate, that this magnificent victory is gained by the Cross, by labors, penances, mortifications and the acceptance of contempt: all of which are the trade-marks and evidences of true love and the special watchwords of the predestined.

Thou, my daughter, knowest the value of the

holy Cross and the honor which it confers upon ignominies and tribulations; do thou embrace the Cross and bear it with joy in imitation of my Son and thy Master (Matth. 14, 24). In this mortal life let thy glory be in tribulations, persecutions (Rom. 5, 3), contempt, infirmities, poverty, humiliation and in whatever is painful and averse to mortal flesh. And in order that in all thy exercises thou mayest imitate me and give me pleasure, I wish that thou seek no rest or consolation in any earthly thing. Thou must not dwell in thy thoughts upon what thou bearest, nor seek to relieve thyself by enlisting the compassion of others. Much less must thou make much of, or try to impress others with the recital of the persecutions or molestations of creatures, nor should it ever be heard from thy lips, how much thou endurest, nor shouldst thou compare thy sufferings with those of others. I do not wish to say, that it is a sin to accept of some reasonable and moderate alleviation, or to mention thy afflictions. But in thee, my dearest, much alleviation, if not a sin, would be an infidelity to thy Spouse and Lord; for He has put thee personally under more obligation than many generations of men and thy response in suffering and love will be defective and wanting, if it is not complete and loyal in all respects. So faithful does the Lord wish thy correspondence to be, that thou must allow thy weak nature not even one sigh for mere natural relief and consolation. If love alone impels thee, thou wilt allow thyself to be carried along by its sweet force and rest in it alone; and the love of the Cross would immediately dispense with such natural relief, in the same way as thou knowest I have done in my total self-sacrifice. Let this be to thee a general rule: that all human consolation is an imperfection and

a danger, and that thou shouldst welcome only that, which the Most High sends to thee Himself or through his holy angels. And even these favors of the divine right hand thou must accept only in so far as they strengthen thee to suffer more constantly and to withdraw thee from all that ministers to the senses.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

My daughter, seek with all the powers of thy mind during thy whole life to remember the mysteries manifested to thee in this chapter. I, as thy Mother and thy Instructress, shall ask the Lord by his divine power to impress in thy heart the knowledge, which I have vouchsafed thee, in order that it may remain fixed and ever present to thee as long as thou livest. In virtue of this blessing keep in thy memory Christ crucified, who is my divine Son and thy Spouse, and never forget the sufferings of the Cross and the doctrine taught by Him upon it. This is the mirror by which thou must arrange all thy adornments and the source from which thou art to draw thy interior beauty, like a true daughter of the Prince (Ps. 44, 14), in order that thou mayest be prepared, proceed and reign as the spouse of the supreme King. As this honorable title obliges thee to seek with all thy power to imitate Him as far as is becoming thy station and possible to thee by his grace, and as this is to be the true fruit of my doctrine, I wish that from today on thou live crucified with Christ, entirely assimilated to thy exemplar and model and dead to this earthly life (II Cor. 5, 15). I desire that in thee shall vanish the effects of the first sin, that thou live only for the operations and movements of divine virtue, and that thou renounce thy inheritance as a daughter of the first Adam, in order that in thee may bear fruit the inheritance of the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, thy Redeemer and Teacher.

Thy state of life must be for thee a most rigid cross on which thou must remain crucified, and thou must not widen thy path by seeking for dispensation and weakening interpretation of thy rules to make it easy and comfortable, but at the same time, insecure and full of imperfections. This is the deception into which the children of Babylon and of Adam fall, that each one according to his state seeks to find ease in the work commanded by the law of God. They set aside the salvation of their soul in their efforts to buy heaven very cheaply, or risk losing it by dreading the restrictions and entire subjection necessary to observe rigorously the divine law and its precepts. Hence arises the desire to find explanations and opinions, which smooth the paths and highways of eternal life, without heeding the doctrine of my divine Son, that the path of life is very narrow (Matth. 7, 14). They forget that the Lord himself has walked these narrow paths, in order that no one might imagine he can reach eternal life over paths more spacious and comfortable to the flesh and to the inclinations vitiated by sins. This danger is greater for ecclesiastics and religious, who by their very state must follow the Master and must accommodate themselves to his life of poverty and must choose for this purpose the way of the Cross. Some of them however are apt to seek the dignities attached to the religious state for their temporal advantage, for the increase of their own honor and praise. In order to secure it they lighten the Cross they have promised to bear, so that they live a carnal life, little restricted and much eased by deceptive dispensations and vain excuses. In their time they shall recognize the truth and that saying of the Holy Ghost: Each one thinks his path

secure, but the Lord weighs in his hands the hearts of men (Prov. 21, 2).

So far from this deceit, do I wish thee to be, my daughter, that thou must live strictly up to the most rigorous demands of thy profession; in such a way that thou canst not stretch thyself in any way, being nailed immovably to the Cross with Christ. Thou must set aside all temporal advantages, for the least point pertaining to the utmost perfection of thy state. Thy right hand, my daughter, must be nailed to the Cross by obedience, and reserve not for thyself the least movement, the least activity, or word, or thought not controlled by this virtue. Thou must not maintain any position that is of thy own choice, but only such as is willed by others; thou must not appear wise in thy own conceit in anything, but ignorant and blind, in order to follow entirely the guidance of thy superiors (Prov. 3, 7). He that promises, says the wise man (Prov. 4, 1), binds his hands, and by his words shall he be bound and chained. Thou hast bound thy hand by the vow of obedience and hast thereby lost thy liberty and thy right of wishing or not wishing. Thy left hand thou hast nailed to the Cross by the vow of poverty, depriving thee of all right to follow any inclination toward the objects usually coveted by the eyes; for both in the use and in the desire for such creatures thou must rigorously imitate Christ impoverished and despoiled upon the Cross. By the third vow, that of chastity, thy feet are nailed to the Cross, in order that all thy steps and movements may be pure, chaste and beautiful. For this thou must not permit in thy presence the least word offensive to purity, nor, by looking upon or touching any human creature, allow any sensual image or impression within thee; thy eyes and all thy senses are to re-

main consecrated to chastity, without making more use of them than to fix them upon Jesus crucified. The fourth vow, of perpetual enclosure, thou wilt maintain in the bosom of my divine Son, to which I consign thee. In order that this doctrine may appear to thee sweet, and this path less narrow, contemplate and consider in thy heart the image of my Son and Lord full of blood, torments, sorrows, and at last nailed to the Cross, no part of his sacred body being exempt from wounds and excruciating pains. The Lord and I were most solicitous and compassionate toward all the children of men; for them We suffered and endured such bitter sorrows, in order that they might be encouraged not to refuse less severe sufferings for their own eternal good and in return for so obliging a love. Therefore let mortals show themselves thankful, willingly entering upon the rough and thorny path and accepting the Cross, to bear it after Christ. Thus will they walk upon the direct path toward heaven and gain an eternal happiness (Matth. 16, 24).

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S CROSS.

My daughter, by divine enlightenment thou hast received a deep understanding of the glorious triumph of my Son and Lord on the Cross over the demons and of their rout and vanquishment. But thou must remember that thou art yet ignorant of much more than what thou knowest concerning these ineffable mysteries. For in mortal flesh the creature cannot comprehend them in their reality, and divine Providence reserves the full understanding of them as a reward of the saints in heaven and for the beatific vision, in which these mysteries will be comprehended clearly. This insight will also be given to the reprobate, to each one according to his degree, for their confusion and punishment at the end of their career. But what thou hast learned will suffice to apprise thee of the dangers of this mortal life and to enliven thy hope of overcoming thy enemies. I wish also to warn thee of the new wrath, which the dragon has conceived especially against thee for what thou hast written in this chapter. He has ceaselessly pursued thee with his wrath and has sought to hinder thee from writing my life, as thou hast experienced continually in this work. But now his haughty pride is incensed against thee especially, because thou hast revealed his humiliation, his crushing ruin at the Death of my most blessed Son, the condition in which it left him and the secret counsels for revenging himself upon the children of Adam and especially upon the members of

the holy church. All this has excited and disturbed him anew, seeing that these secrets will be revealed to those yet ignorant of them. Thou wilt feel his wrath in the difficulties he will place in thy way, the temptations and persecutions thou hast already encountered. Therefore I warn thee to be wary and circumspect against the rabid fury and cruelty of thy enemy.

Thou art astonished, and justly, to see, on the one hand, the power of my Son's merits and of his Redemption, the ruin and weakness caused by the demons in men; and, on the other hand, to see the power of the devil lording it over the world in haughty presumption. Although the light given to thee in writing this history is equal to this astonishment, I wish to add still another point of information, in order that thou mayest guard thyself so much the more carefully against enemies so full of malice. It is certain, that when hell came to the full knowledge of the sacrament of the Incarnation and Redemption, and of the poverty, humility and lowliness of the birth of Jesus, of his life and miracles, ending in the mysterious Passion and Death, and of all the rest of his labors to draw men to Him, Lucifer and his demons were weakened and disabled and they saw that they could not tempt the faithful in the same way as the rest of men and as they ceaselessly desire to do. In the primitive Church this terror and fear of the baptized, and of the followers of Christ our Lord, continued many years; for the divine virtues shone forth brightly in their imitation of Christ, in their zeal in confessing the faith, in following the teachings of the Gospel, in practicing heroic virtues and most fervent love, humility, patience and contempt of the vanities and deceits of the world. Many shed their blood and gave their life for Christ the Lord; they per-

formed many admirable and exalted deeds for the glory of his name. This invincible fortitude resulted from their living at a time so near to the Passion and Death of their Redeemer and so close to the prodigious example of his patience and humility; but also because they were less tempted by the devils, who could not so soon rise from the crushing defeat brought upon them by the triumph of the crucified God.

This close imitation and living reproduction of Christ, confronting the demons in the first children of the Church, they feared so much, that they dared not approach and they precipitously fled from the Apostles and the just ones imbued with the doctrines of my divine Son. In them were offered up to the Almighty the first fruits of grace, and of Redemption. What is seen in the saints and in perfect Christians in those times, would happen in the present times with all the Catholics if they would accept grace and work with it instead of permitting it to go to waste, and if they would seek the way of the Cross; for Lucifer fears it just as much now as in the times thou hast been writing of. But soon the charity, zeal and devotion in many of the faithful began to grow cold and they forgot the blessings of the Redemption; they yielded to their carnal inclinations and desires, they loved vanity and avarice, and permitted themselves to be fascinated and deceived by the false pretenses of Lucifer, obscuring the glory of their Savior and inveigling them into the meshes of their mortal enemies. This foul ingratitude has thrown the world into the present state and has encouraged the demons to rise up in their pride against God, audaciously presuming to possess themselves of all the children of Adam on account of this forgetfulness and carelessness of Catholics. They presume to plot the destruction of

the whole Church by the perversion of so many who have fallen away from it; and by inducing those who are in it, to think little of it, or by hindering them from producing the fruits of the blood and death of their Redeemer. The greatest misfortune is, that many Catholics fail to recognize this great damage and do not seriously think of a remedy, although they can presume that the times, of which Jesus forewarned the women of Jerusalem, have arrived; namely, those in which the sterile should be happy, and in which many would call upon the mountains and the hills to cover and fall upon them, in order not to see the devastation of wickedness cutting down the sons of perdition, the dried trees, barren of all the fruits of virtue. In these evil times dost thou live, my dearest; and in order that thou mayest not be included in the perdition of so many souls, do thou bewail it in the bitterness of thy heart, never forgetting the mysteries of the Incarnation, Passion and Death of my Divine Son. I desire thee to give thanks in compensation for the great number of those, who forget it, and I assure thee that the mere memory and contemplation of these mysteries are terrible to hell, torment and drive away the demons, and that they avoid and fly those who thankfully remember the life and passion of my divine Son.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST.

My daughter, the lance-thrust which my blessed Son received in his side, was cruel and very painful only to me; but its effects and mysteries are most sweet to those souls who know how to taste its sweetness. It was a great affliction to me; but whoever meets with this mysterious favor will find it a great relief and consolation in his sorrows. In order that thou mayest understand this and participate in it, thou must know, that my Son and Lord, on account of his most ardent love for men, in addition to the wounds of the feet and hands, wished to open the wound of his heart, the seat of love, in order that through this port the souls might enter and there receive refuge and relief. This is the only retreat which I wish thee to seek during the time of thy banishment, and which thou must consider as thy habitation upon earth. There thou wilt find the conditions and laws of love for imitating me and learn how for injuries thou must return blessings to all who commit them against thee and thine, just as thou hast seen me do, when I was grieved by the wounding of the side of my dead Son. I assure thee, my dearest, that thou canst not do anything more adapted to the obtaining of the efficacious graces from the Almighty. The prayer, which thou offerest in a forgiving spirit, is powerful not only for thy own good, but for the good of the one that offends thee; for the kind heart of my Son is easily moved, when He sees that creatures imitate Him

in pardoning offenders and in praying for them; for they thereby participate in his most ardent charity manifested on the Cross. Write this doctrine in thy heart and in imitation of me practice this virtue, of which I thought so highly. Through this wound look upon the heart of Christ thy Spouse and upon me, sweetly and ardently loving in it thy enemies and all creatures.

Consider also the anxious and ever ready providence of the Most High in coming to the aid of the creatures, that call to Him in true confidence. This thou hast seen in my behalf, when I found myself afflicted and at a loss concerning the proper burial of my divine Son. In order to come to my assistance in this plight, the Lord showed his sweet love by moving the hearts of Joseph and Nikodemus and of the other faithful to assist me in burying Him. By their opportune help I was so much consoled in this tribulation, that on account of their behavior and my prayer the Most High filled them with wonderful influences of the Divinity, by which they were regaled during the time of taking Jesus from the Cross and his burial; and from that time on these faithful were enlightened and filled with the mysteries of the Redemption. This is the admirable disposition of the sweet and powerful providence of God, that in order to bind Himself to do good to some of his creatures, He sends affliction upon others, so that he moves the benevolence of others to benefit those in necessity.

Thus the benefactor, on account of the good work he does and on account of the prayer of the poor, is rewarded by receiving graces of which he otherwise would not be worthy. The Father of mercies, who inspires and assists the good work done, afterwards pays for it

as if it were due in justice. For we can correspond to his inspirations merely according to our insignificant abilities, while all that is really good, comes entirely from his hands (James 1, 7).

Consider also the equity maintained by this Providence in compensating the injuries received in patient suffering. For after my divine Son had suffered death amid the contempt, dishonor and blasphemies of men, the Most High at once provided for an honorable burial and moved many to confess Him as the true God and Redeemer, to proclaim Him as holy, innocent and just, and, at the very time when they had finished their frightful crucifixion, to adore Him as the Son of God. Even his enemies were made to feel within themselves the horror and confusion of their sin in persecuting Him. Although these benefits availed not all men, yet all of them were effects of the innocent Death of the Lord. I also concurred in my prayers, in order that the Lord might be acknowledged and honored by those known to me.

CHAPTER XXV.

RECOLLECTION.

My daughter, attend to the teaching of this chapter as being the most appropriate and necessary for the state assigned to thee by the Most High and for the correspondence in love which thou owest Him. This requires of thee, that in the midst of thy labors and intercourse with the creatures, whether in commanding or governing as superior, or obeying as a subject, thou do not permit thyself by any of these duties or other exterior occupations to neglect the attention due to the presence of thy Savior in the secret and higher parts of thy soul; nor withdraw thyself from the light of the holy Spirit and his constant communications. For my divine Son seeks, in the secrets of thy heart, such ways as are hidden to the demon and to which thy passions have no access; for they lead to the sanctuary, whither the Highpriest alone can enter (Heb. 9, 7) and where the soul enjoys the hidden embraces of its King and Spouse, as soon as it prepares for Him his chamber of rest with a single and eager mind. There shalt thou find thy Lord propitious, the Most High, liberal, thy Creator, merciful, thy sweet Spouse and Redeemer, loving; then wilt thou not fear the powers of darkness, nor the effects of sin, which are unknown in that region of light and truth. But the soul disordered by anxiety for the visible things, or careless in the observance of the divine law will close up these ways; it will be embarrassed by the disorderly attach-

ments of the passions; it will be hindered by useless cares, and much more by restlessness of mind and by the want of serenity and interior peace; for the heart must be untrammelled, pure and detached from all that is not truth and light.

Thou hast well understood and experienced this doctrine, and moreover I have shown it to thee in practice as in the clearest mirror, namely in my behavior amid the sorrows, sighs and afflictions of the Passion of my divine Son, and amid the solicitous cares, occupations and watchings during his burial and during the assistance rendered to the Apostles and the holy women. During my whole life thou hast seen me act in the same manner, uniting the works of the spirit with exterior occupations without friction or hindrance. In order then to imitate me in all this as I require, it is necessary, that neither by the unavoidable intercourse with creatures, nor by the labors of thy state of life, nor by the hardships of this life of exile, nor by the temptations or malice of the demon, thou permit thy heart to desire anything that will hinder thee, or pay attention to anything which destroys thy recollection. And I warn thee, my dearest, that if thou art not very vigilant and careful in this matter, thou wilt lose much time, abuse immense and extraordinary blessings, frustrate the high and holy purposes of the Lord, and wilt grieve me and the angels; since all of Us desire that thy conversation be with Us. Thou wilt lose the quiet of thy spirit and the interior consolations, many degrees of grace, the desired increase of divine love, and finally the most copious reward in heaven. So much does it concern thee to listen to me and obey me in all that I teach thee with a Mother's kindness. Consider it, my daughter, ponder it, and bend upon it thy mind, so that through

my intercession and by divine grace thou mayest put it into practice. Take heed also to imitate me in the faithful love, by which I abstained from the sweets of inferior delights in imitation of my Master. Do thou praise Him for this and for the blessings He brought to the saints in limbo, when his most holy soul descended to free them and fill them with joy at his sight, all of which were operations of his infinite love.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION.

My daughter, rejoice in thy very anxiety of not being able to explain in words what thy interior faculties perceive concerning the exalted mysteries recorded in thy writing. To acknowledge oneself conquered by such sovereign sacraments as these must be looked upon as a victory for creatures, and as redounding to the glory of God; and in mortal flesh still more so. I felt the pains of my divine Son, and, although I did not lose my life, I endured the agonies of death mysteriously; therefore I experienced in myself also this wonderful and mystical resurrection to a most exalted state of grace and activity. The essence of God is infinite; and although the creature can participate in it so highly, yet there remains much to understand, love and enjoy. In order that now thou mayest by the help of thy understanding trace something of the glory of Christ my Son, of my own and of the saints, I wish to give thee some rules, by which thou canst pass on from the consideration of the gifts of the glorified body to those of the soul. Thou already knowest that the gifts of the soul are vision, comprehension and fruition, while thou hast already mentioned those of the body as being: clearness, impassability, subtility and agility.

Each of these gifts are correspondingly augmented in him who in the state of grace performs the least meritorious work, even if it be no more than removing a straw or giving a cup of water for the love of God (Matth. 10, 42). For each of the most insig-

nificant works the creature gains an increase of these gifts; an increase of clearness exceeding many times the sunlight and added to its state of blessedness; an increase of impassibility, by which man recedes from human and earthly corruption farther than what all created efforts and strength could ever effect in resisting or separating itself from such infirmity or changefulness; an increase of subtilty, by which he advances beyond all that could offer it resistance and gains new power of penetration; an increase of agility, surpassing all the activity of birds, of winds, and all other active creatures, such as fire and the elements tending to their centre. From this increase of the gifts of the body merited by good works, thou wilt understand the augmentation of the gifts of the soul; for those of the body are derived from those of the soul and correspond with them. In the beatific vision each merit secures greater clearness and insight into the divine attributes and perfections than that acquired by all the doctors and enlightened members of the Church. Likewise the gift of apprehension, or possession of the divine Object, is augmented; for the security of the possession of the highest and infinite Good makes the tranquillity and rest of its enjoyment more estimable than if the soul possessed all that is precious and rich, desirable and worthy of attainment in all creation, even if possessed all at one time. Fruition, the third gift of the soul, on account of the love with which man performs the smallest acts, so exalts the degrees of functional love, that the greatest love of men here on earth can never be compared thereto; nor can the delight resulting therefrom ever be compared with all the delights of this mortal life.

Elevate therefore now thy thoughts, my daughter, and from these wonderful rewards, gained by one

little deed done for God, consider what shall be the lot of the saints, who for the love of God have performed such heroic and magnificent works, and have suffered such cruel torments and martyrdom as are known in the Church of Christ. And if these things happen in mere men, subject to faults and imperfections that retard merit, imagine, as far as thou canst, the exaltation of my divine Son. Then thou wilt feel how limited is human capacity, especially in mortal life, to comprehend worthily this mystery and to conceive in a becoming manner such greatness. The most holy soul of my Lord was united substantially to the Divinity and on account of this hypostatic union the ocean of his Divinity necessarily communicated Itself to his divine and human personality, beatifying it as participating in the very essence of God in an ineffable manner. Although his glory depended not on merits, since it was given to Him as consequent upon the hypostatical union from the first instant of his conception in my womb; yet the works of the thirty-three years of his life, his being born in poverty, living in labor, loving as a pilgrim, operating in all the virtues, redeeming the human race, founding the Church and the doctrines of the faith: all this demanded, that the glory of his body be measured by that of his soul. And therefore his greatness is ineffable and immense, to be manifested only in eternal life. In connection with the magnificent exaltation of my divine Son, the right hand of the Almighty wrought also in me effects proportionate to a mere creature, and in them I forgot all the tribulations and sorrows of the Passion. Similar was the lot of the Fathers of limbo and the other saints, when they received their rewards. I forgot the bitterness and labors I had suffered; for the great joy drove out pain, though I never lost from view what my Son had suffered for the human race.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DIVINE FAVORS TO SOULS.

My daughter, the instruction which I shall give thee in this chapter shall be also an answer to thy desire of knowing why my divine Son appeared at one time as a gardener, at another as a stranger, and why He did not always make Himself known at first sight. Know then, my dearest, that the Marys and the Apostles, although they were followers of Christ and at that time privileged and perfect in comparison with the rest of men; yet they had withal arrived only at a low degree of perfection and holiness and not far enough advanced in the school of their Master. They were weak in faith and in other virtues; they were less constant and fervent than was due to their vocation and to the graces they had received. The little faults in souls favored and chosen for the friendship and familiar intercourse with God weigh more in the scales of his most righteous equity, than some great ones in other souls not selected for these privileges. Hence, although the Apostles and the Marys were friends of the Savior, yet, on account of their faults and their weaknesses, their lukewarm and faltering love, they were not prepared for the immediate effects of the full knowledge and presence of their Master. In this paternal love He therefore created in them the proper dispositions by enlightening them and enkindling them with words of eternal life before He manifested Himself to them. When their hearts had been thus prepared by faith and love, He made known

and communicated to them the abundance of his Divinity together with other admirable gifts and graces by which they were renewed and raised above themselves. When they had enjoyed his favors, He again disappeared, in order that they might desire so much the more earnestly the sweetness of his communications and intercourse. This was the secret of his appearing in disguise to Magdalen, to the Apostles, and to the disciples at Emmaus. The same course He pursues respectively with many other souls, whom He chooses for intimate converse and communication.

By the consideration of these admirable tactics of divine Providence thou wilt be instructed and reprehended for the doubts and incredulity with which thou hast so often met the divine blessings and favors of my Son. Thou wilt learn that it is time thou moderate thy constant fears, lest thou pass from doubt to obstinacy and to slowness of heart in giving thanks. Thou wilt also draw a very useful lesson if thou worthily contemplate, how quickly the immense charity of the Most High responds to those who are contrite and humble of heart (Ps. 33, 19), and how ready He is, immediately to assist those who seek Him in love, who meditate and speak of his Passion and Death (Wis. 6, 13). All this thou seest well exemplified in saint Peter, Mary Magdalen and in the disciples. Imitate then, my dearest, the fervor of Magdalen in search for her Master, who did not permit herself to be diverted even by the angels, or leave the sepulchre with the others, or rest until she found Him so full of sweetness and kindness. This she also earned by having accompanied Me through all the Passion with an ardent and unfaltering heart. Similar was also the conduct of the other Marys, who thus merited before

so many others the joys of the Resurrection. Next to them the humility and contrition of saint Peter in bewailing his denial, secured the same reward; immediately the Lord bent down to console him and commissioned the women to tell especially him of his Resurrection and shortly after, He visited him, confirmed him in faith and filled him with joy and the gifts of grace. Then before appearing to others, He showed Himself to the two disciples, because, although in doubt, they were conversing regretfully of his Death. I assure thee, my daughter, that none of the works of men done with a good intention and righteous heart, shall remain without an immediate reward. For neither fire will in its greatest intensity so quickly consume the driest tow, nor will a stone, freed from hindrance, so quickly fall to its centre, nor the waves of the sea rush on with so great an impulse and force, as the goodness of the Most High and his grace to those souls, who are well disposed and have cleared away the hindrances of sin. This is a truth which causes the greatest wonder in the saints, who are made aware of it in heaven. Praise Him for this goodness and also for his drawing vast good out of evil, as He did out of the incredulity of the Apostles. For through it He manifested his mercy to them and has made his Resurrection plain to all men, and evident his kindness in pardoning the Apostles. He showed his willingness to forget their faults, his readiness to seek them and appear to them, dealing humanely with them as a father, enlightening them and instructing them according to their needs and the weakness of their faith.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GLORIES OF MARY.

My daughter, it is just, that in thy admiration of the hidden favors vouchsafed to me by the right hand of the Almighty, thy love be awakened in eternal benedictions and praise of his wonderful operations. Although I withhold from thy knowledge many of them, which thou shalt know after leaving mortal flesh; yet I wish, that from now on thou consider it thy especial duty to praise and magnify the Lord, because, in spite of my being formed of the same material as Adam (Luke 1, 51), He has raised me from the dust and has manifested to me the power of his arm, operating in me such great things as can never be merited. In order to exercise thyself in these praises of the Most High, repeat many times over the canticle of the Magnificat, in which I have briefly comprehended them. When thou art alone, say it prostrate and upon thy knees; and above all, let it be done with the sincerest love and veneration. This exercise shall be especially agreeable and pleasing in my eyes; and I shall present it to the Lord, if thou perform it in the manner I tell thee.

As thou art now again astonished, that the Evangelists should not have made any mention of these wonderful favors of the Lord toward me, I will repeat what I have already told thee; for I wish that all mortals should remember the reason for the reticence of the Gospels. I myself have commanded the Evangelists not to write anything about my privileges except

what is contained in the articles of faith and in the commandments of the divine law and what was necessary for the establishment of the Church. For, as the Teacher of the Church, I knew by the infused science of the Most High, what would then be proper for its beginning. The manifestation of my prerogatives, being included in the dignity of Mother of God and in my being full of grace, was reserved by the divine Providence for a more opportune and convenient time; namely, when the faith should be better known and established. In the course of the centuries some mysteries pertaining to me have been made plain; but the plenitude of light has been given to thee, who art a poor and insignificant creature; and this has been done on account of the necessities and unhappy state of the world. God in his kindness wishes to offer this opportune remedy to men, in order that all of them may seek help and eternal salvation through my intercession. This thou hast always understood, and thou shalt understand it still better. But above all I desire, that thou occupy thyself entirely in the imitation of my life and in the continual contemplation of my virtues and works, in order that thou mayest gain the desired victory over my and thy enemies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LIBERALITY OF GOD.

My daughter, thou wilt appropriately close this second part of my life by remembering the lesson concerning the most efficacious sweetness of the divine love and the immense liberality of God with those souls, that do not hinder its flowing. It is in conformity with the inclinations of his holy and perfect will to regale rather than afflict creatures, to console them rather than cause them sorrow, to reward them rather than to chastise them, to rejoice rather than grieve them. But mortals ignore this divine science, because they desire from the hands of the Most High such consolations, delights and rewards, as are earthly and dangerous, and they prefer them to the true and more secure blessings. The divine Love then corrects this fault by the lessons conveyed in tribulations and punishments. Human nature is slow, coarse and uneducated; and if it is not cultivated and softened, it gives no fruit in season, and on account of its evil inclinations, will never of itself become fit for the most loving and sweet intercourse with the highest Good. Therefore it must be shaped and reduced by the hammer of adversities, refined in the crucible of tribulation, in order that it may become fit and capable of the divine gifts and favors and may learn to despise terrestrial and fallacious goods, wherein death is concealed.

I counted for little all that I endured, when I saw the reward which the divine Goodness had prepared for me; and therefore He ordained, in his admirable Provi-

dence, that I should return to the militant Church of my own free will and choice. This I knew would redound to my greater glory and to the exaltation of his holy name, while it would provide assistance to his Church and to his children in an admirable and holy manner (I Tim. 1, 17). It seemed to me a sacred duty, that I deprive myself of the eternal felicity of which I was in possession and, returning from heaven to earth, gain new fruits of labor and love for the Almighty; all this I owed to the divine Goodness, which had raised me up from the dust. Learn therefore, my beloved, from my example, and excite thyself to imitate me most eagerly during these times, in which the holy Church is so disconsolate and overwhelmed by tribulations and in which there are none of her children to console her. In this cause I desire that thou labor strenuously, ready to suffer in prayer and supplication, and crying from the bottom of thy heart to the Omnipotent. And if it were necessary thou shouldst be willing to give thy life. I assure thee, my daughter, thy solicitude shall be very pleasing in the eyes of my divine Son and in mine.

Let it all be for the glory and honor of the Most High, the King of the ages, the Immortal and Invisible (I Tim. 1, 17), and for that of his Mother, the most blessed Mary, through all the eternities!

BOOK SEVEN

Lessons of the Queen in Connection with her Life from the Ascension of her Son to her Visit of St. James in Saragossa, Spain.

CHAPTER I.

GENEROUS SACRIFICE.

My daughter, though I have until now so many times urged thee to detach thyself from all visible and earthly things and to die to thyself and to all that savors of a child of Adam, and though I have fully exhorted and instructed thee in the first and second part of my life already written; yet I now call upon thee anew, with the affection of a kind and loving Mother, and I invite thee in the name of my divine Son, in my own name and in that of the angels, who also love thee so much, that, forgetting all else, thou raise thyself to another life, more exalted and heavenly, approaching that of the eternal felicity. I desire that thou leave entirely the ancient Babylon, thy enemies and all their false and harassing vanities, and that thou approach the holy and celestial Jerusalem, live in its porches, where thou art to occupy thyself in the true and perfect imitation of my life and thus arrive by the divine grace at the intimate union of my Lord and thy most faithful Spouse. Hear me then, my dearest; with a joyful attention and alacrity of soul follow me fervently, reproducing in thy life the image of what thou writest, and study what works I performed after I came back from the right hand of my divine Son to this world.

Meditate upon and penetrate into all my doings, in order that, according to the graces thou receivest, thou mayest continually copy, what thou understandest and writest. Divine favor will not fail thee, for the Most High will not deny it to those, who on their part exert themselves according to their power, and He will not refuse thee his assistance to attain what is pleasing and acceptable to Him, if thou do not by thy negligence make thyself unworthy. Prepare and expand thy heart, inflame thy will, purify thy understanding, and cast out from thy faculties every image and impression of visible creatures. For thus will none of them interfere with thee, nor any of them draw thee into venial sin or imperfections; the Most High will deposit in thee his hidden wisdom and thus thou shalt be prepared and anxious to execute all that is most pleasing in our eyes and enjoined upon thee by Us.

From now on thy life is to be like that of one newly called from the grave. Just as such a one is apt to turn to a new life, as if estranged and foreign to all that he loved in his former life, changed in all his desires, reformed and alienated from all his former inclinations; so I desire, that thou, my daughter, be renewed. For thou must live as if thou wert re-endowed with the highest possible gifts of the soul by the divine power within thee. But for these divine operations it is necessary that thou use thy own efforts and prepare thy whole heart, so that thou mayest be entirely free and become a blank tablet as it were, whereon the Lord, with his own fingers, may write and stamp, as in soft and yielding wax, the seal of my virtues. His Majesty desires thee to be an instrument in his hands wherewith to operate his own holy and perfect will; and thou knowest, that an instrument does not offer re-

sistance to the artisan, and if it possesses free will, it uses it only in order to permit itself to be freely moved. Now then, my dearest, come, come whither I call thee; and remember that if it is natural to the highest Good to bestow favors and communicate Itself to the creatures at all times, yet in the present age, this Lord and Father of mercies seeks to manifest more abundantly his liberal kindness toward mortals. For the times have advanced toward their end and there are few, who are willing to dispose themselves for the reception of his divine gifts. Do not thou lose such a favorable occasion; follow me, and tread in my footsteps; and since I invite thee to such a happiness in motherly love and by such high and perfect doctrine, do not grieve the Holy Ghost by thy tardiness.

CHAPTER II.

DEVOTION TO MOST HOLY MARY.

My daughter, I wish to tell thee for thy comfort and the comfort of my servants, that thou hast written of these mysteries in these chapters to my great satisfaction and with the approbation of the Most High. He wishes the world to know what I have done for the Church in coming back from the empyrean heaven to assist the faithful, and how much I desire to help the Catholics who seek my aid in accordance with the commands of God and my own maternal affection. The saints also, and especially saint John, were particularly rejoiced, that thou hast made mention of their jubilee at seeing me ascend with my Son and Lord; for it is time that the children of the Church should know this and understand more fully the blessings to which the Omnipotent has raised me. They are thereby to enliven their hope and make themselves more capable of the favors I can and will bestow upon them. Let them know that I, as a loving Mother, am filled with pity at seeing them so deceived and oppressed by the tyranny of satan, to whom they have blindly fallen victims. Saint John my servant has concealed many other sacraments in the twenty-first and the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse concerning the favors shown me by the Almighty. In the course of this history thou hast revealed those which the faithful can profitably know at present, and thou shalt reveal still more.

But thou must without delay gather for thyself the fruits of all thou hast understood and written. First of all thou must advance in heartfelt love and devotion

toward me, and be convinced that I shall be thy help in all tribulations, thy constant assistance in all thy works; that the portals of my mercy are opened up for thee and for all whom thou recommendest to me, if only thou shalt make thyself such as I desire. Therefore I inform thee, my dearest, and urgently remind thee, that, in the same manner as I was fitted out in heaven for returning and engaging in a more perfect activity on this earth, so the Lord desires thee to be renewed in the heaven of thy interior, in the secret and superior parts of thy spirit, in those private exercises by which thou hast created the interior solitude for writing the rest of this life. Understand that all this has not been brought about without special providence of God, which thou wilt easily see in pondering over and recording thy experiences before beginning this third part. Now that thou art left alone and art freed from the government and daily intercourse of this community, I give thee this advice; and there is now especial reason, that with the divine favor thou renew thyself in the imitation of my life and in putting into practice, as far as possible, what thou knowest of me. This is the will of my divine Son, and is in harmony with thy own wishes. Hear then my teaching and gird thyself with fortitude (Prov. 31, 17). Resolve with all the powers of thy will to be attentive, fervent, constant, eager and diligent in seeking to please thy Spouse and Lord. Accustom thyself never to lose Him out of sight, even when thou descendest to intercourse with creatures and engagest in the works of Martha. I shall be thy Teacher. The angels shall stand by thee, so that with them and by means of their enlightenments thou continually praise the Lord. The Most High will lend thee his strength, so that thou mayest fight his battles with his and thy enemies. Do not make thyself unworthy of such great blessings and favors.

CHAPTER III.

IMITATION OF MARY.

My daughter, thou hast rightly wondered at the hidden and supernal favors, which I received at the hands of my Son, and at the humility and thankfulness, with which I received them; likewise the loving attention which I paid to the necessities of the Apostles and the faithful of the Church amid all my joy. It is time, my dearest, that thou gather the fruits of this knowledge; for neither canst thou now comprehend more, nor do I desire less of thee than that thou be to me a faithful daughter, who imitates me fervently, and a disciple, who listens to me and follows me with all her heart. Stir up thy faith then in order to be convinced, that I am powerful to confer favors, and trust, that I will enrich thee in unstinted liberality with gifts beyond all thy desires. But at the same time do thou humiliate thyself to the very earth and shrink to the very last place among creatures; for of thyself thou art more useless than the most vile and despicable dust and thou canst call nothing thy own except misery and want. Consider well within thyself how great and exquisite is the kindness and condescension of the Most High in regard to thee, and what kind of thanks thou owest Him. If the one who pays his debts, even entirely, cannot take to himself special credit; then it is just, that thou, who canst not satisfy thy debt, shouldst remain humble, for though thou labor ever so much and according to all thy powers, thou shalt nevertheless remain a debtor. What shall then be thy indebtedness, if thou remain remiss and negligent?

In this prudent alertness thou wilt understand, how closely thou must imitate me in living faith, in confident hope and in fervent love, in profound humility and in the worship and reverence due to the infinite greatness of the Lord. I warn thee again of the cunning vigilance of the serpent, who seeks to induce mortals to neglect the veneration and worship due to God and presumptuously to despise this virtue and what it implies. Into the minds of the worldly and of the vicious he instills a most foolish forgetfulness of the Catholic truths, in order that divine faith may not keep alive in them the fear and veneration of the Most High; and thus he succeeds in making them like to the heathens, who do not know the true God. Others, who strive after virtue and perform some good works, the enemy leads into a dangerous lukewarmness and negligence, wherein they overlook what they are losing on account of their want of fervor. Those that concern themselves more earnestly about perfection, the dragon deceives with a certain coarse over-confidence, so that on account of the favors they receive and on account of the divine mercy which they experience, they begin to consider themselves as special favorites of the Lord, forgetting the humble fear and veneration, which they ought to experience in the presence of Him, before whom, according to the teaching of the holy Church, the powers of heaven tremble. But since I have on other occasion reminded and admonished thee concerning this danger, let my mentioning it here suffice.

In this manner I desire that thou be faithful and punctual in the practice of this doctrine, exercising it in all thy exterior actions without affectation or excess, and teaching others by thy own example the holy fear and veneration due from creatures to their Creator. I desire

that thou teach and impress this science especially upon thy religious, so that they may not be ignorant of the humility and reverence, with which they are to converse with God. The most efficacious instruction thou canst give, will be thy example in fulfilling all thy obligations; for these works **thou** must neither conceal, nor ever omit for fear of vanity. This example is due in much greater degree from those that govern others, since it is their duty to exhort, move and accompany their subjects in the holy fear of the Lord, which is done more efficaciously by example than by words. Admonish them particularly to hold in veneration the priests as the anointed of the Lord. In imitation of me do thou always ask for their blessing, when thou approachest or leavest them. The more thou seest thy own self favored by the divine condescension, so much the more bear in mind the necessities and the afflictions of thy neighbors and the dangers of those in sin, praying for all in great faith and confidence. For, thy love of God cannot be true, if thou art content with enjoying only thyself, and in the meanwhile forgettest thy brethren. Thou must anxiously solicit the highest goods, which thou knowest of and participatest in, for all men, since no one is excluded therefrom and since all need the help and communication of God. In the love of me thou wilt understand, how thou must imitate me in all things.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YEARNING AFTER THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

My daughter, in small esteem and thankfulness do the children of the Church hold this blessing of the Most High, by which, in addition to sending of his Son as their Master and Redeemer, He sent also the Holy Ghost into his Church. So great was the love, by which He sought to draw them to Himself, that, in order to make them sharers of his divine perfections, He sent them first the Son, who is wisdom (John 3, 16) and afterwards the Holy Ghost, who is love, so that all might be enriched in the manner in which they were capable. The divine Spirit, in coming for the first time upon the Apostles and the others gathered with them, intended it as a pledge and testimony, that He would confer the same favor on the rest of the children of the Church, of light and of the Gospel, and that He was ready to communicate his gifts to all, if all will dispose themselves toward receiving them. In witness to this truth the Holy Ghost came upon many of the faithful in visible form and with visible effects (Acts 8, 17; 10, 44; 11, 15), because they were truly faithful servants, humble and sincere, pure and ready of heart to receive Him. Also in our times He comes to many just souls, although not with such open manifestations, because it is neither necessary nor proper. The interior effects and gifts are all of the same nature, acting according to the disposition and state of the one who receives them.

Blessed is the soul which sighs and aspires after this blessing and seeks to participate in this divine fire, which enkindles, enlightens and consumes all that is terrestrial and carnal, which purifies and raises it up to a new existence, union and participation with God himself. This happiness, as thy true and loving Mother, I desire for thee, my daughter, and in order that thou mayest attain it in its fullness, I again exhort thee to prepare thy heart by seeking to preserve inviolable tranquillity and peace in all that may happen to thee. The divine clemency wishes to raise thee to a habitation very exalted and secure, where the torments of thy spirit shall come to an end and whither the assaults neither of the world nor of hell can reach; where in thy own repose the Lord shall rest and find in thee a worthy dwelling-place and a temple of his glory. Thou shalt not escape the attacks and temptations, directed against thee by the dragon with the most cunning astuteness; but do thou live in continued wariness, lest thou be disturbed or disquieted in the interior of thy soul. Guard thy treasures in secret; enjoy the delights of the Lord, the sweet effects of his chaste love, the influences of his holy science; for in this regard He has singled thee out from many generations in utmost liberality.

Take heed then of thy calling and assure thyself, that the Most High offers thee anew the participation and communication of his divine Spirit and his gifts. Remember however, that when He confers them, He does not take away the freedom of thy will; for He ever leaves the election of good or evil to its free arbitrament. Hence, trusting in the divine favor, thou must efficaciously resolve to imitate me in the works shown to thee of my life and thou must never hinder the effects and the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In order

that thou mayest understand better this my doctrine, I will explain to thee the effects of all his seven gifts.

The first one, which is the gift of Wisdom, fills the mind with the knowledge and the delight of divine things and moves the heart to a sincere love toward the practice and exercise of all that is good, all that is best, most perfect and agreeable in the eyes of the Lord. With this impulse thou must concur, yielding thyself entirely to the pleasure of his divine will and despising all that might hinder thee, no matter how pleasant it may seem to thy inclinations or alluring to thy appetite. Wisdom is aided by the second gift, that of Intellect, which gives special light to penetrate profoundly into the object presented to the understanding. With this gift thou must co-operate by diverting and turning aside thy attention and thoughts from all the bastard and foreign objects of knowledge, which the demon either by himself or through other creatures shall present to thy mind in order to distract it and prevent it from penetrating deeply into the truth of divine things. This kind of distraction greatly embarrasses the mind, for the two kinds of knowledge are incompatible with each other, and whenever the limited faculties of man are divided into their attention to many objects, they enter into them less and attend less, than if all their operations were riveted on one alone. In this is evident the truth of what the Gospel says: that no one can serve two masters (Matth. 6, 24). When the whole attention of the soul has thus been riveted on understanding the good, Fortitude, the third gift, is necessary, in order to execute resolutely all that the understanding has perceived as most holy, perfect and agreeable before the Lord. The difficulties and hindrances in the pursuit of the good are to be overcome by Fortitude, making the creature

ready to suffer whatever labor or pain, in order not to be deprived of the true and highest Good it has come to know.

But it often happens, that natural ignorance and doubt added to temptation withhold the creature from following out the conclusions and consequences of the divine truth, and thus create hindrances in the execution of what is more perfect. Hence, against the false prudence of the flesh, God furnishes the fourth gift, that of Science, which gives light to distinguish between different kinds of good, teaches the most certain and secure way, and decides upon it, when necessary. To this is joined the gift of Piety, the fifth, which inclines the soul with sweet urgency to all that is truly pleasing and acceptable to the Lord and to what is of real spiritual benefit to the one executing it. It inclines the creatures to these things not through the natural passions, but by holy, perfect and virtuous motives. Then, in order that man may be guided by high prudence, the sixth gift, that of Counsel, supports his understanding, in order that he may act with precision and without temerity; weighing the means and taking counsel with himself and with others discreetly for gaining honest and holy ends by the selection of the proper means. To all these is added Fear, the last, which guards and sets the seal upon all of them. This gift inclines the heart to fly and avoid all that is imperfect, dangerous or alien to the virtues and perfections of the soul, thus serving as a wall of defense. It is necessary to understand the object and the manner of this holy Fear, lest it grow excessive and cause the creature to fear, where there is no occasion. Such has often happened to thee through the astuteness of the serpent, when, under guise of holy Fear, the devil entangled thee in an inordinate liking for the blessings of the Lord. But

by this instruction thou art now informed how thou must exercise in thee the gifts of the Most High and prepare thyself for them. I remind and admonish thee, that this science of holy Fear is the accompaniment of the favors communicated to thee by the Most High, and that it fills the soul with sweetness, peace and tranquillity. It enables the creature properly to estimate and appreciate the gifts, which come from the powerful hand of the Almighty; neither are any of them unimportant, nor does this Fear hinder a proper estimate of these gifts. It induces the soul to give thanks with all its powers and to humiliate itself to the dust. In understanding these truths without error and in suppressing the cowardly fear of slaves, thou shalt be filled with filial Fear, which, as thy guiding star, will help thee to navigate securely in this ocean of tears.

CHAPTER V.

HOLY FEAR.

My daughter, in what thou hast come to know of the events related in this chapter, thou wilt find a great deal that points to the mystery of the predestination of souls. Be convinced that, since the Redemption was so overflowing and copious, it was sufficient for the salvation of all men (Rom. 5, 20). The divine truth was made known to all, whoever heard its preaching or who saw the effects of the coming of the Godman into the world. Besides the outward preaching and knowledge of the remedy, all received interior inspirations and helps in order to seek and accept the means. You are surprised that, in spite of all this, only three thousand were converted by the first sermon of the Apostle among all that great multitude then in Jerusalem. It should cause a greater surprise that in our times so few are converted to the way of eternal life, as the Gospel is more widespread, its preaching is frequent, its ministers numerous, the light of the Church clearer and the knowledge of the divine mysteries more definite. With all this men are blinder, the hearts more hardened, pride more inflated, avarice more bold, and all the vices are practiced without fear of God and without consideration.

In this most preverse and unhappy state mortals cannot complain of the most high and equitable providence of the Lord, who offers to all and every one his fatherly mercy, and points out to them both the way of life and the way of death; so that if any man hardens

his heart, God can permit it in strictest justice. The reprobate will have none but themselves to blame, if afterwards, when there is no more time, they shall be uselessly dismayed with what in opportune time they could and should have known. If in the short and transient life, which is given to them in order to merit the eternal, they close their eyes and ears to the truth and to the light, and if they listen to the demon, giving themselves up to all the promptings of his malice; if they thus abuse the goodness and clemency of the Lord, what can they then allege as their excuse? If they do not know how to pardon an injury and for the slightest offense meditate the direst vengeance; if, for the sake of increasing their property, they pervert the entire order of reason and of natural brotherhood; if for a passing delight they forget the eternal pains, and if, in addition to all this, they despise the warnings, helps and admonitions sent to them by God to inspire them with the fear of perdition and induce them to avoid it, how shall they afterwards find fault with the divine clemency? Let then mortals, who have sinned against God, undeceive themselves: without penance there shall be no grace, without reform no pardon, without pardon no glory. But just as these are not conceded to those that are unworthy, so they are also never denied to those that are worthy; nor is ever the mercy of God withheld from any one who seeks to obtain it.

From all these truths I desire, my daughter, that thou collect for thyself what will be for thy welfare. Let the first be, that thou receive attentively each holy inspiration, each advice or instruction, although it come from the most inferior minister of the Lord, or from whatever creature. Thou must prudently consider, that none comes to thy notice by chance and without divine predisposition; for there is no doubt that the Providence

of the Most High ordains all things for thy instruction, and in this light must thou look upon them with humble thanks, trying to find the virtue, which thou canst and shouldst practice in accordance with the reminder and to exercise it in the manner in which thou understandest and knowest it. Do not despise any one of them, though it may seem only a trifle; for by it thou must dispose thyself for other works of greater virtue and merit. Consider secondly, what a damage is wrought in souls by the neglect of so many helps, inspirations, callings and other blessings of the Lord; for their ingratitude vindicates the justice of the Most High in allowing so many sinners to become hardened in their sins. If this is such a formidable danger for all men, how much more will it be a danger for thee, if thou abuse the abundant graces and favors, which the kindness of the Lord has showered upon thee in preference to many generations of men? And since my divine Son ordains all these things for thy own good and for the good of other souls, I wish, lastly, that in imitation of me, as has been shown thee, thou impregnate thy heart with a most sincere determination to assist all the children of the Church, and all other men, as far as thou canst, clamoring to the Lord from thy inmost heart and asking Him to look upon the souls with mercy for their salvation. And in order that they may gain this blessing, offer to suffer for them as a victim if necessary; remembering, that they cost my divine Son and thy Spouse the shedding of his blood and his life, and remembering my own labors in the Church. Do thou continually implore the divine mercy for the fruit of that Redemption, and this practice I command thee under obedience.

CHAPTER VI.

UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

My daughter, although in the present life thou canst not penetrate into the mystery of the love which I had and still have for men; yet, in addition to that which thou hast understood, I wish, for thy better information, that thou consider again, how the Lord has given me the title of Mother and Teacher of the Church. With it He infused into my soul an ineffable participation of charity and mercy for the children of Adam. As I was a mere creature and since this blessing was so immense, its effects would have deprived me many times of life, if the divine power had not miraculously sustained me. These effects I felt frequently in my thanksgiving, when souls were received into the Church or were made partakers of the eternal glory; for I alone could know and estimate this happiness in its entirety, and since I realized it, I gave thanks for it to the Almighty with intense fervor and deepest humility. But the occasions in which I was affected most deeply, was when I asked for the conversion of sinners and when any of the faithful fell into eternal perdition. At such and other times, experiencing the extreme opposite of my joys, I suffered much more than the martyrs in all their torments. I exerted myself for each soul with an eminent and supernatural force. For all this the children of Adam stand in debt to me, since I offered up for them so many times my own life. Though at present I am not any more in a condition to offer it for them, yet my love,

which seeks their eternal salvation, is not diminished, but is more exalted and perfect.

If such was the force of my love of God, when my fellow-men were concerned, thou canst understand what was my love toward the Lord himself, when receiving Him in the blessed Sacrament. I will tell thee a secret concerning what happened when I received holy Communion for the first time from the hands of saint Peter. On this occasion the Most High gave such sway to the violence of my love, that my heart opened up in fact and, as was my desire, permitted the sacramental Lord to enter and take his rest there as in his legitimate throne and tabernacle. From this thou wilt understand, that, if in the glory which I now enjoy I could be sorrowful, one of the reasons for being so would be the dreadful carelessness and presumption with which mortals approach to receive the sacred body and blood of my divine Son; some of them unclean and abominable, others without veneration and respect, and nearly all of them without attention, without appreciation or consideration for the value of that food, which is nothing less than God himself for eternal life or eternal death.

Fear then, my daughter, this dreadful danger; weep to see it in so many children of the Church and ask the intervention of the Lord. In pondering over my teachings make thyself worthy to understand profoundly this mystery of love, and when thou art permitted to receive Him, detach and cleanse thy interior from all earthly things, attending only to the fact, that thou art about to receive the infinite and incomprehensible God himself. Surpass thyself in love, in humility, and thanksgiving; since all that thou canst ever do, will be less than is demanded by such an exalted mystery. For thy better preparation, let that which I did on such oc-

casions be thy model and example. I desire especially that thou imitate me interiorly, as in the three bodily prostrations. Observe also that which thou hast added thyself in order to do reverence to the sacramental flesh and blood as coming from my womb and as having been nourished and grown from my milk. Ever keep up this devotion; for the truth thou hast perceived; that this consecrated body contains part of my own blood and substance, is in fact real. And if in thy love thou wouldst deeply grieve to see the sacred body and blood ignominiously and sacrilegiously trampled under foot; thou shouldst feel the same grief and shed bitter tears at seeing so many children of the Church treat it with irreverence and without any fear or decorum. Weep then over this misfortune; weep, because there are few who weep over it, and weep, because the evident designs of the love of my divine Son are thus frustrated. And in order that thou mayest weep more bitterly, I tell thee, that, just as in the primitive Church there were so many, who were saved by it, now there are countless souls, who damn themselves through it. I do not tell thee what happens in this regard every day; lest, if thou knew it, and have within thee any love, thou shouldst die of grief. This damage is done, because the children of the faith are following darkness, love vanity, covet riches, and nearly all of them seek after vain and deceitful pleasure, which blinds and obscures the understanding and covers up the light with darkness, which knows no distinction between the good and the bad and penetrates not the truths of the evangelical doctrine.

CHAPTER VII.

FALSE ESTEEM OF CREATED THINGS.

My daughter, thou hast so far been well informed of my life and activity, considering that thou art a mere creature. Besides me, there is no other created being, which thou canst better use as thy model and original for thy greater holiness and perfection. But now thou hast entered upon the description of the supreme state of virtue reached by me in mortal life. This favor should oblige thee to renew thy desires and direct all the attention of thy faculties toward the perfect imitation of all that I teach thee. It is time, my dearest, and there is reason, that thou deliver thyself entirely over to my will in what I seek of thee. In order that thou mayest animate thyself to the attainment of this blessing, I wish thee to take notice, that, though the species of the Sacrament are consumed, my divine Son, whenever souls receive Him with reverence and fervor and prepare for Him a pure and ardent heart, remains with them with special graces, by which He assists them, enriches and directs them in return for their hospitality. Few are the souls, who partake of this blessing, because many know of it, who approach the holy Sacrament without the proper disposition, as if by haphazard or habit, and without being solicitous for the reverence and holy fear due to it. But as thou art now informed of this secret, I desire that, since by the orders of thy superiors thou receivest it every day, thou prepare thyself worthily each time and thus partake of this great blessing.

For this end thou must avail thyself of the remembrance of what I did, and by it regulate thy aspirations, thy fervor, thy love, and all that is necessary to prepare thy heart as a temple and habitation of thy Spouse and highest King. Labor then to collect all thy powers within thyself; before and after receiving observe all that pertains to the fidelity of a Spouse, and especially must thou place a guard over thy eyes and a watch over all thy senses, in order that no profane or foreign image may enter into the temple of the Lord. Keep thy heart entirely pure and unspotted; for when it is impure or preoccupied, the plenitude of divine light and wisdom cannot enter (Wis. 1, 4). All this thou wilt know from what God has shown thee, if thou hast attended to it with an upright purpose. Even supposing that thou canst not exempt thyself from all intercourse with creatures, it is befitting that thou hold thy senses in great subjection, and that thou do not permit them to introduce the image of any sensible thing, by which thou wouldst not be assisted in striving after the most holy and pure of virtue. Separate the precious from the worthless, the truth from deceit. In order that thou mayest imitate me perfectly, I wish that from now on thou attend to the choice thou art to make in all things great or small, so that thou err in none, perverting the order of divine light.

Consider attentively the common deception of mortals and the woeful damage they suffer. For in the decisions of their will they ordinarily are moved solely by what they perceive through the senses, and they immediately proceed to act upon their choice without further consideration or counsel. Since the sensible impressions immediately move the animal passions and inclinations, it is evident that men do not act according to

right reason, but according to the impulse of passion, excited by the senses and their objects. Hence, he that considers only the injury and pain caused, is straightway moved to vengeance; he that follows only his hankering after strange property, as soon as he lays his eyes upon it, is impelled to injustice. In the same manner act so many unfortunates, who follow the concupiscence of the eyes, the movements of the flesh, and the pride of life, because these are the only things offered by the world and the devil. In their blind deception they follow darkness as their light, taste the bitter as sweet, take deadly poison for remedy of their souls, and hold that for wisdom which is nothing but diabolical and earthly ignorance. Do thou guard thyself against these pernicious errors, and never resolve on anything, or govern thyself by anything that is merely sensible or arising from sensible impressions, nor pursue the advantages held out through them. In thy actions take counsel first of all from the interior knowledge and light communicated to thee by God, in order that thou mayest not go blindly forward; and He shall always grant thee sufficient guidance. Immediately seek the advice of thy superiors and teachers, if thou canst do so before making thy choice. And if thy superior or teacher is not at hand, seek counsel of others, even inferiors; for this is more secure than to follow thy own will, which may be disturbed and blinded by passion. This is the rule to be followed especially in the exterior works, pursuing them with recollection, with secrecy, and according to the demands of circumstances and fraternal charity as they occur. In all of them it is necessary not to lose out of sight the north-star of interior light, while moving in the profound gulf of the intercourse with creatures, where there is continual danger of perishing.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUPPRESSION OF EVEN THE SMALLEST FAULTS.

My daughter, in what thou hast understood and written in this chapter, thou possessest many and important admonitions for thy salvation and for the salvation of the faithful in the Church. First of all thou must meditate upon the solicitude and watchfulness with which I sought after the eternal salvation of all the faithful without overlooking the least of their necessities and dangers. I taught them the truth, prayed incessantly, encouraged them in their labors, urged the Lord to assist them; and above all I defended them from the demons and their cunning and furious wrath. All these blessings I procure for Christians from heaven in our times; and if not all experience them, it is not because I do not solicit them, but because there are very few of the faithful who call to me with all their heart and who dispose themselves toward meriting and reaping the fruit of my maternal love. I would defend them all from the dragon, if all would call upon me and if all would fear his pernicious deceits, by which they are ensnared and entrapped to eternal damnation. In order that all may wake up to this frightful danger, I now give them this new reminder. I assure thee, my daughter, that all those, who damn themselves after the death of my Son and in spite of the benefits and favors procured by my intercession, will suffer greater torments in hell than those who were lost before his coming and before I was in the world. Thus those who from now on understand these mysteries and

despise them to their loss, shall be subject to new and greater punishments.

They must also remember in what estimation they should hold their souls, since I did and am doing so much every day for them, after they have been redeemed by the passion and death of my divine Son. This forgetfulness among men is very blameworthy and deserves a fearful chastisement. How unreasonable and how damnable is the conduct of a man, who for a momentary sensible pleasure, which at most must end with life and generally lasts only for a short time, labors so much and still claims to have the faith, while at the same time he takes no account of his immortal soul, and forgets it, as if it ended and were consumed with the visible things? They consider not, that when all comes to an end, the soul begins to suffer or enjoy the eternal and everlasting things. As thou knowest this truth and the perversity of mortals, thou wilt not be astonished at the power of the dragon in our days; for where there is continual combat, he that comes out victorious will gain the strength, which the vanquished loses. This is especially true of the cruel and incessant conflict of the demons, where the souls will gain in strength by victory and the devils will be weakened, as happened when my Son conquered them and I afterwards. But when this serpent finds itself victorious over men, then it will raise its proud head, gain new strength from its weakness and a greater sway, as it does now in the world; for the lovers of its vanity have subjected themselves and are following the standard and the fabulations of the devil. In the midst of this ruin hell has opened its maw and the more it is glutted, the more insatiable becomes its hunger, seeking to bury in its infernal caverns all the rest of mankind.

Fear, my dearest, this danger as thou knowest it,

and do thou live in a continual watchfulness not to open the gate of thy heart to the wiles of this bloodthirsty beast. Thou hast a warning in Ananias and Saphira, into whose soul the demon entered as soon as he had found out their desire of money and could assault them through this portal. I do not wish thee to strive after anything pertaining to this mortal life; and I wish thee so to suppress and extinguish within thyself all the passions and inclinations of weak nature, that not even the evil spirits, with all their watchfulness, shall find in thee the least disorderly movement of pride, covetousness, vanity, anger or any other passion. This is the science of the saints, and without it no one can live secure in mortal flesh. On account of ignoring it, innumerable souls perish. Do thou learn it diligently, and teach it thy religious, in order that each one may be vigilant over her own self. With it they shall live in true peace and charity without deception; each one, and all of them together, united in the peaceful tranquillity of the divine Spirit and adorned by the exercise of all virtues, will be an impregnable fortress for their enemies. Remind thyself and thy religious of the chastisement of Ananias and Saphira, exhort them to be very solicitous in the observance of their rules and constitutions; for thus shall they merit my protection and special assistance.

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CHAPTER IX.

ZEAL FOR SOULS.

My daughter, since in this chapter thou hast particularly learnt of the matchless and bitter sorrow, with which I bewailed the perdition of souls, thou thyself must learn also what thou must do for the salvation of thy own and that of others in order to imitate me in the perfection which I require of thee. No torment, nor death itself, would I have refused, if such had been necessary to save any of the damned, and to save them, I would have esteemed all sufferings a sweet alleviation in my most ardent charity. Hence, if thou dost not die of this kind of sorrow, thou art at least not excused from willingness to suffer all that the Lord sends thee for advancing this cause, or from praying and laboring all in thy power to prevent any sin in thy neighbor; and when thou canst not all at once obtain thy object, or dost not know whether the Lord has heard thee, do not lose confidence, but enliven it and persevere in thy efforts; for such a solicitude can never displease Him, who desires the salvation of all his redeemed more than thou. If nevertheless thou art not heard in thy prayers, make use of the means, which prudence and charity require, and return anew to thy prayers. The Most High is always attracted by this sort of charity for the neighbor and by the love which seeks to hinder sin. He desires not the death of the sinner (Ezech. 33, 11); and, as thou hast written, He does not entertain an absolute and antecedent decree of damning his creatures, but seeks to save them all, if they do not pursue perdition of their own free will. Although

He permits this in his justice as being inseparable from the free will of man, it is against his inclination. Do not restrict thyself in these petitions, and in those concerning temporal things, pray that his holy will be done in all that is proper.

If I desire that thou labor with such fervor of charity for the salvation of thy brethren, consider what thou must do to save thyself, and in what estimation thou must hold thy own soul, for which an infinite price was offered. I wish to admonish thee as a Mother, that when temptations and passions incline thee toward the commission of any sin, no matter how small, remember the sorrows and the tears which the knowledge of the sins of men and the desire to prevent them has caused me. Do not thou cause the like in me, my dearest; for although I am now incapable of that pain, yet thou deprivest me of the accidental joy of seeing thee, to whom I condescended to become a Mother and Teacher, really endowed with the perfection taught in my school. If thou art unfaithful in this, thou wilt frustrate my great desire of seeing thee please my divine Son and accomplish his holy will in all its plenitude. By the infused light which thou receivest, do thou ponder how great are any faults thou mayest commit after being so favored and bound in duty to the Lord and to myself. Dangers and temptations will not be wanting to thee during the rest of thy earthly life; but in all of them remember my teaching, my sorrows and my tears, and above all what thou owest to my divine Son, who is so liberal toward thee in applying to thee the fruit of his blood for the purpose of eliciting thy grateful correspondence.

CHAPTER X.

VALUE OF REVELATIONS

My daughter, the divine mysteries, when they are presented and explained to such men as are accustomed only to the perception of earthly and sensible things, appear to be insignificant, especially if at the same time their souls are not purified from sin and cleared of the darkness of guilt. For the human faculties, which, besides being of limited capacity, are embarrassed by their attention and affection to what is apparent, draw away from the truth, and, being accustomed to obscurity, are dazzled by the light. On this account the earthly and animal men conceive such distorted and low ideas of the wonderful works of the Most High (1 Cor. 2, 14), and also of the works which I do for them day after day. They tread under foot the gems, and they do not distinguish the bread of the children from the gross food of irrational brutes. All that is heavenly and divine seems to them insipid, because they fail to perceive the savor of the senses; thus they become incapable of attending to the high things and of profiting from the science of life and the understanding contained in them.

But the Most High, my dearest, has, sought to preserve thee from this danger and has given thee knowledge and light, improving thy senses and faculties, in order that thou, being made capable and enlivened by the force of divine grace, mayest perceive and distinguish without error the mysteries and sacraments, which I manifest to thee. Although I have many times told

thee, that in this mortal life, thou shalt never penetrate or value them in their entirety, yet thou canst and thou must, according to thy powers, show thy appreciation of them by learning and imitating my works. From the variety and bitterness of my pains and sorrows, with which my whole life was interwoven, even after I had returned from the right hand of my Son in heaven to the earth, thou wilt understand, that thy own life must be of the same texture, if thou wishest to follow me as my faithful disciple. In the prudent and impartial humility, with which I governed the Apostles and all the faithful, thou hast an example of how thou must proceed in the government of thy subjects, in meekness, in modesty, with humble dignity, and especially without acceptance of persons and without making a distinction in favor of any person in those things that can and ought to be common to all. This facilitates the true charity and humility of those that govern; for if they show these virtues, they will not be so dictatory in their commands, nor so presumptuous in their own opinion, nor will they pervert the order of justice, as is nowadays done with so much damage throughout Christianity. Pride, vanity, self-interest, self-love and the love of their own relations have infected nearly all the course and conduct of government; and hence all has gone wrong, and all the governments have been filled with injustice and thrown into frightful confusion.

In the most ardent zeal, which I had for the honor of my Son and true God and for the preaching and defense of his holy name; in my joy at seeing the divine will fulfilled and at seeing the fruit of the passion and death of Christ spreading with the Church among souls in the favors which I procured for the glorious martyr Stephen as the first who offered his life for that

object; in all this, my daughter, thou wilt find great motives for praising the Most High in his divine works, so worthy of veneration and glory; and thou wilt likewise find cause for imitating me, and blessing his immense goodness for the wisdom He gave me, in order to fulfill all his holy will and pleasure.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CREDO.

My daughter, besides the mysteries thou hast recorded in this chapter, I wish for thy greater information and consolation, to manifest to thee other secrets of my activity. After the Apostles had formulated the Creed, thou must know that I repeated it many times during the day on my knees and with the profoundest reverence. And whenever the words "born of the Virgin Mary" occurred, I prostrated myself upon the earth with such humility, gratitude and praise of the Most High, as no creature can comprehend. In these acts of devotion I had present in my mind all the mortals in order to make up for the irreverence with which they pronounce these sacred words. Through my intercession the Lord was induced to inspire the Church to repeat so many times the Credo, the Ave Maria, and Pater Noster in the divine office; to accustom the religious to humiliate themselves in reciting them, and to genuflect in the Credo of the Mass at the words: "Et incarnatus est." Thus the Church, at least partially, seeks to pay the debt it owes to the Lord for having vouchsafed such knowledge, and for the mysteries, so worthy of reverence and gratitude, contained in the Creed.

Many times the holy angels sang to me the Credo with wonderful harmony and sweetness, rejoicing my spirit. Sometimes they would sing the Ave Maria, including those words: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus." Whenever they pronounced this most holy name,

or the name Mary, they made a most profound bow, causing in me new effects of loving humility, abasing me to the very earth at the thought of how far exalted is the being of God above my own terrestrial existence. O my daughter, bear in mind the reverence with which thou shouldst recite the Credo, Pater and Ave, and do not make thyself guilty of the thoughtless rudeness of many of the faithful in this matter. The frequency with which these prayers and divine words are repeated in the Church should not infringe upon the proper reverence due to them. This presumption arises from pronouncing them merely by the lips without meditating upon their meaning. I desire that they be to thee a subject of continuous meditation; and for this purpose the Most High has given thee a taste for studying the catechism; and thou wilt please the Lord and me, if thou carry it with thee and read it many times, as thou hast been accustomed to and as I again charge thee to do from now on. Recommend it also to thy religious, for this kind of knowledge is the jewel which should adorn the spouses of Christ and which all Christians should bear about with them.

It should also impress thee, that I was so anxious to see the Creed written as soon as it was necessary for the welfare of the Church. To know what will advance the glory and service of God and benefit one's own conscience, and not to execute it, or at least to make no effort toward it, is a very reprehensible lukewarmness. And it is especially shameful in those men, who, whenever they are in want of any temporal good, brook no delay and clamorously ask God to satisfy their wishes; as for instance, when they fail in health or fear bad crops, or when they dread being deprived of much less necessary, or even superfluous and dangerous things. At the same time, although they recognize their deep obligations to

God, they pretend not to understand them, or delay their fulfillment out of negligence and want of love. Do thou guard thyself against and never permit this disorder. Just as I was most anxious in that which pertained to the service of the children of the Church, so do thou be punctual in all that thou perceivest to be the will of God, whether it is for the benefit of thy soul or for the benefit of thy neighbor; and thus thou wilt imitate my example.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT MINISTRY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

My daughter, by the lessons contained in this chapter I wish to draw thee to deplore, with inmost groaning and sighing and, if possible, with tears of blood, the difference between the state of the holy Church in our times and that of those primitive times; how its purest gold of holiness has been obscured (Thren. 4, 1), and the ancient beauty in which the Apostles have founded it, is lost; how it has sought foreign and deceitful powders and paints to cover the horrid and distorted ugliness of vice. In order that thou mayest penetrate into this truth, thou must renew in thyself the consideration of the force and eagerness, with which the Divinity seeks to communicate his goodness and perfection to creatures. So great is the impetus of the river of God's goodness overflowing on mankind, that only the free will of man, which He has given to Him in order to receive its benefits, can raise a dam against it; and whenever, through this free will, man resists the influence and force of the divine Goodness, he (according to thy mode of understanding), violates and grieves this immense love in its very essence. But if creatures would place no obstacle and permit its operations, the whole soul would be inundated and satiated with participation in its divine essence and attributes. It would raise the fallen from the dust, enrich the indigent children of Adam, place them above all their miseries and seat them with the princes of his glory (I Kings 2, 8).

From this, my daughter, thou wilt understand two things unknown to human wisdom. First, how pleasing to the highest Goodness is the service of those who, with an ardent zeal for God's glory, devote their labor and solicitude toward removing the obstacles, which men place to their own justification and the communication of his favors. The satisfaction of the Most High, arising from this work in others, cannot be estimated in this mortal life. On this account the ministry of the Apostles, the prelates, the priests and preachers of the divine word are so highly exalted; for they succeed in office those, who founded the Church and who labored in its preservation and extension; all of them are to be co-operators and executors of the immense love of God for the souls created to be sharers in his Divinity. Secondly, thou must ponder the greatness and abundance of the gifts and favors, which the infinite power communicates to those souls, who do not hinder his most liberal bounty. The Lord manifested this truth immediately in the beginnings of the evangelical Church, when, to all those who were to enter into it, He showed his bounty by such great prodigies and wonders, frequently sending the Holy Ghost in a visible manner, working miracles in those who accepted the Creed, and showering forth other hidden favors on the faithful.

But most of all shone forth his almighty power and munificence in the Apostles and disciples, because in them there was no hindrance to his eternal and holy will and they were true instruments and executors of the divine love, imitators and successors of Christ and followers of truth. Hence they were elevated to an ineffable participation in the attributes of God, especially as regards his science, holiness and power, working for themselves and for the souls such great miracles, as

mortal man cannot ever sufficiently extol. After the Apostles, other children were born to the Church, in which, from generation to generation, this divine wisdom and its effects were transplanted (Ps. 44, 17). Leaving aside at present the innumerable martyrs who shed their blood for Christ and gave their lives for the holy faith, consider the founders of religions, the great saints, who flourished in them, the doctors, the bishops, the prelates and apostolical men, through whom the bounty and omnipotence of God was so abundantly manifested. They are so great, that others, who are ministers of God for the welfare of souls, and all the faithful, can have no excuse, even if God does not work similar ones in those He finds fit for his operations.

And to the greater confusion of the negligent ministers of the Church in our days, I desire thee to understand, that in his eternal decrees the Most High dispenses his infinite treasures of the souls through the ministry of the prelates, priests, preachers, and teachers of his divine word. As far as his will is concerned, they might all be angelic rather than human in their holiness and perfection; they might enjoy many privileges and exemptions of nature and grace, and thus become fit ministers of the Most High, if only they would not pervert the order of his infinite wisdom and if they lived up to the dignity to which they are called and chosen before all others. This infinite kindness of God is just as great now, as in the first ages of the Church; the inclination of the highest Goodness to enrich souls is not changed, nor can it be; his condescending liberality has not diminished; the love of his Church is always at its height; his mercy is just as much concerned at the miseries of men, which in our times are become innumerable; the clamor of the sheep of Christ is louder than ever; the prelates, priests

and ministers are more numerous than heretofore. If this is so, to what is to be attributed the loss of so many souls and the ruin of the Christian people? Why is it, that the infidels not only do not enter the Church, but subject it to so much affliction and sorrow? that the prelates and ministers do not shine before the world, exhibiting the splendors of Christ, as in the ages gone by and in the primitive Church?

O my daughter, I invite thee to let thy tears flow over this loss and ruin. Consider how the stones of the sanctuary are scattered about in streets of the city (Thren. 4, 1). See how the priests of the Lord have assimilated themselves to the people (Is. 24, 2), when, on the contrary, they should raise the people to the holiness, which is due to priesthood. The sacerdotal dignity and the precious vestments of virtue are soiled by contagion with the worldly; the anointed of the Lord, consecrated solely to his worship and intercourse, have lapsed from their noble and godlike station; they have lost their beauty in debasing themselves to vile actions, unworthy of their exalted position among men. They affect vanity; they indulge greed and avarice; they serve their own interest; they love money, they place their hopes in treasures of silver and gold; they submit to the flatteries and to the slavery of the worldly and powerful; and, to their still lower degradation, they subject themselves to the petty whims of women, and sometimes make themselves participants in their counsels of malice and wickedness. There is hardly a sheep in the fold of Christ, which recognizes in them the voice of its Pastor, or finds from them the nourishment of that redeeming virtue and holiness, which they should show forth. The little ones ask for bread, and there is none to distribute (Thren. 4, 4). And if it is dealt out in self-interest or as a compliment,

how can it afford wholesome nourishment to the necessitous and infirm from such leprous hands? How shall the heavenly Physician confide to such administrators the medicine of life? Or how can the guilty ones intercede and mediate mercy for those who are less, or even equally, guilty?

These are the reasons why the prelates and priests of our times do not perform the miracles of the Apostles and disciples, and of those who in the primitive Church imitated their lives by an ardent zeal for the honor of the Lord and the conversion of souls. On this account the treasures of the blood and death of Christ in the Church do not bear the same fruits, either in his priests and ministers, nor in the other mortals; for if they neglect and forget to make them fruitful in themselves, how can they expect them to flow over on the rest of the human family? On this account the infidels are not converted on learning of the true faith, although they live within sight of the princes of the Church, the ministers and preachers of the Gospel. The Church in our times is richer in temporal goods, rents and possessions; it abounds with learned men, great prelacies, and multiplied dignities. As all these advantages are due to the blood of Christ, they ought all to be used in his honor and service, promoting the conversion of souls, supporting his poor and enhancing the worship and veneration of his holy name.

Is this the use made of the temporal riches of the Church? Let the captives answer, whether they are ransomed by the rents of the Church; let the infidels testify, whether they are converted, whether heresies are extirpated at the expense of the ecclesiastical treasures. But the public voice will loudly proclaim, that from these same treasures palaces were built, primogeni-

tures established, the airy nothingness of noble titles bought; and, what is most deplorable, it is known to what profane and vile uses those that succeed in the ecclesiastical office put the treasures of the Church, how they dishonor the High-priest Christ and in their lives depart just as far from the imitation of Christ and the Apostles, as the most profane men of the world. If the preaching of the divine word by these ministers is so dead and without power of vivifying the hearers, it is not the fault of truth or of the holy Scriptures; but it is because of the abuse and of the distorted intentions of those that preach it. They seek to compromise the glory of Christ with their own selfish honor and vain esteem, the spiritual goods, with base acquisition of stipends; and if those two selfish ends are reached, they care not for other results of their preaching. Therefore they wander away from the pure and sincere doctrine, and sometimes even from the truth, which the sacred authors have recorded in the Scriptures and according to which the holy teachers have explained them; they slime it over with their own ingenious subtleties, seeking to cause rather the pleasure and admiration of their hearers than their advancement. As the divine truths reach the ears of the sinners so adulterated, they impress upon the mind rather the ingenious sophistry of the preacher, than the charity of Christ; they bring with it no force or efficacy for penetrating the hearts, although full of ingenious artifice to delight the ears.

Let not the chastisement of these vanities and abuses, and of others unknown to the world, astonish thee, my dearest, and be not surprised, that divine justice has so much forsaken the prelates, ministers and preachers of his word, or that the Catholic Church, having such an exalted position in its beginnings, should now be

brought to such low estate. And if there are some priests and ministers, who are not infected with these lamentable vices, the Church owes so much the more to my divine Son in these times, when He is so deeply offended and outraged. With those that are zealous, He is most liberal; but they are few in number, as is evident from the ruin of the Christian people and from the contempt into which the priests and preachers of the Gospel have fallen. For if the number of the perfect and the zealous workers were great, without a doubt sinners would reform and amend their lives; many infidels would be converted; all would look upon and hear with reverence and fear such preachers, priests and prelates, they would respect them for their dignity and holiness, and not for their usurped authority and outward show, which induces a reverence too much like worldly applause and altogether without fruit. Do not be afraid or abashed for having written all this for they themselves know that it is the truth and thou dost not write of thy own choice, but at my command. Hence bewail such a sad state, and invite heaven and earth to help thee in thy weeping; for there are few who sorrow on account of it, and this is the greatest of all the injuries committed against the Lord by the children of the Church.

CHAPTER XIII.

PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE.

My daughter, none of the faithful should be ignorant of the fact, that the Most High could have drawn and converted saint Paul without resorting to such miracles of his infinite power. But He made use of them in order to show men, how much his bounty is inclined to pardon them and raise them to his friendship and grace, and in order to teach them, by the example of this great Apostle, how they, on their part, should co-operate and respond to his calls. Many souls the Lord wakes up and urges on by his inspiration and help. Many do respond and justify themselves through the Sacraments of the Church; but not all persevere in their justification and still a fewer number follow it up or strive after perfection: beginning in spirit, they relax, and finish in the flesh. The cause of their want of perseverance in grace and relapse into their sins is their not imitating the spirit of saint Paul at his conversion, when he exclaimed: "Lord, what is it Thou wishest with me, and what shall I do for Thee?" If some of them proclaim this sentiment with their lips, it is not from their whole heart, and they always retain some love of themselves, of honor, of possessions, of sensual pleasure or of some occasion of sin, and thus they soon again stumble and fall.

But the Apostle was a true and living example of one converted by the light of grace, not only because he passed from an extreme of sin into that of wonder-

ful grace and friendship of God; but also because he cooperated to his utmost with the call of God, departing at once and entirely from all his evil dispositions and self-seeking and placing himself entirely at the disposal of the divine will and pleasure. This total denegation of self and surrender to the will of God is contained in those words: "Lord, what dost Thou wish to do with me?" and in it consisted, as far as depended upon him, all his salvation. As he pronounced them with all the sincerity of a contrite and humbled heart, he renounced his own will and delivered himself over to that of the Lord, resolved from that moment forward to permit none of his faculties of mind or sense to serve the animal or sensual life into which he had strayed. He delivered himself over to the service of the Almighty in whatever manner or direction should become known to him as being the divine will, ready to execute it without delay or questioning. And this he immediately set about by entering the city and obeying the command of the Lord given through the disciple Ananias. As the Most High searches the secrets of the human heart, He saw the sincerity, with which saint Paul corresponded to his vocation and yielded to his divine will and disposition. He not only received him with great pleasure, but multiplied exceedingly his graces, gifts and wonderful favors, which even Paul would not have received or ever have merited without this entire submission to the wishes of the Lord.

Conformably to these truth, my daughter, I desire thee to execute fully my oft-repeated commands and exhortations, that thou forget the visible, the apparent and deceitful. Repeat very often, and more with the heart than with the lips those words of saint Paul: "Lord, what dost Thou wish to do with me?" For as soon as thou beginnest to do anything of thy own choice, it

will not be true, that thou seekest solely the will of the Lord. The instrument has no motion or action except that imparted to it by the artisan; and if it had its own will, it would be able to resist and act contrary to the will of the one using it. The same holds true between God and the soul: for, if it entertains any desire of its own independently of God, it will militate against the pleasure of the Lord. As He keeps inviolate the liberty of action conceded to man, He will permit it to lead man astray, as soon as he decides for himself without reference to the direction of his Maker.

And since it is not proper that the doings of creatures in this mortal life should be miraculously governed by the divine power, God, in order that men might not advance false excuses, has implanted a law into their hearts and also constituted his holy Church, in order that they might know the divine will and regulate their conduct in the fulfilling of it. Moreover, for additional security, He has appointed superiors and ministers in his Church, in order that hearing and obeying them, men might obey the Lord in them. All this security thou, my dearest, possessest in fullness, so that thou shouldst neither admit of any movement, thought, desire of thy own, nor fulfill thy own will in anything independently of the will and direction of him who has charge of thy soul; for him the Lord sends to thee, just as He sent Ananias to saint Paul. Moreover thou art in a particular manner obliged to this obedience, because the Most High looks upon thee with an especial love and grace and desires to use thee as an instrument in his hands, assists thee, governs thee, and moves thee directly as well as indirectly through me and his holy angels; and all this He continues to do faithfully, as is well known to thee. Consider then, how much reason thou hast to die to thy

own desires and live only for the will of God, and that it alone should give life to all thy actions and operations. Cut short therefore all thy reflections and self-reliance and remember, that, even if thou shouldst have the wisdom of the most learned, the counsel of the most prudent, and the natural intelligence of the angels, thou couldst, with all this, know how to execute his will far less perfectly than by resigning and leaving all to his divine pleasure. He alone knows what is suitable to thee and seeks it with an eternal love; He chose thy ways and governs thee in them. Permit thyself to be guided by his divine light, without losing time in doing thy duty; for in this delay lurks the danger of erring, and in my doctrine lie all security and success. Write it in thy heart and fulfill it with all thy strength, in order that thou mayest merit my intercession and, through it, to be brought near to the Most High.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

My daughter, by no power of human words wilt thou in this mortal life ever succeed in describing the envy of Lucifer and his demons against men, or the malice, astuteness, deceits and ruses, with which in his wrath he seeks to bring them into sin and later on to the eternal torments. He tries to hinder all good works, and such as are performed he tries to minimize, or to destroy and pervert as to their merits. All the malice of which his own mind is capable, he attempts to inject into the souls. Against these attacks God provides admirable protection if men will only co-operate and correspond on their part. Hence the Apostle admonishes them to walk carefully amid all these dangers and conflicts; not like the foolish, but as wise, redeeming their time; because the days of mortal life are evil and full of dangers (Ephes. 5, 15). Again he exhorts them to be fixed and constant in good works, because their labor shall not be in vain before the Lord (I Cor 15, 58). The truth of this our enemy knows and dreads, hence he seeks with deepest malice to cause dismay in the souls at the commission of one sin, in order that they may ruin themselves by despair and leave off all good works; for thus would they throw aside the weapons with which the angels can defend them and do battle with the demons. Although these works in the sinner have not the life of charity or of merit for grace or glory yet they are very useful. Sometime it happens, that on account

of the habit of doing good the divine clemency furnishes efficacious help for performing these works with greater fervor, or with sorrow for sins and true charity, by which the soul regains justification.

By all our good deeds as creatures we open up ways to the blessed for defending us and for asking the divine mercy to look upon us and snatch us from sin. The saints also feel obliged to come to the assistance of those that sincerely invoke them in danger and that show them a special devotion. If the saints in their charity are so inclined to favor men in the dangerous conflicts with the devils, thou must not be surprised, my dearest, that I am so merciful with the sinners who take refuge in my clemency; for I desire their salvation infinitely more than they themselves. Innumerable are those whom I have saved from the infernal dragon because of their devotion to me, even though they have recited only one Ave, or have said only one word in my honor and invocation. So great is my love for them, that if they would call upon me in time and with sincerity, none of them would perish. But the sinners and the reprobate do no such thing; because the wounds of sin, not being of the body, do not distress them, and the oftener they are committed, the less regret or sorrow do they cause. The second sin is already like wounding a dead body which knows neither fear, nor defense, nor sensation.

The result of this torpid insensibility to eternal damnation, and to the deceits of the devils in fastening it upon men, is dreadful. Without knowing upon what they rest their false security, the sinners are asleep and perfectly at ease as to their ruin, when they ought justly to fear and take heed of the swiftly approaching eternal death; or at least seek help by praying to the Lord, or to me, or the saints. But even this, which costs them so

little, they do not know how to begin, until the time, in which the conditions of their salvation can be realized, has, for many of them, passed away. If for some of them I still procure salvation in the last agony, this privilege cannot be common to all. Hence are lost so many children of the Church, who in their ingratitude and foolishness despise the many and powerful helps given by the divine clemency in most opportune time. Therefore also it will increase their confusion, when they shall see, that, with the mercy of their God, my own kindest wishes to save them, and the charity of the saints before their eyes, they have robbed God of the glory of their conversion; and not afforded me or to the angels or saints the joy of saving them in answer to their heartfelt invocation.

I wish, my daughter, to manifest to thee still another secret. Thou already knowest, that my Son and Lord in the Gospel says: That the angels have joy in heaven whenever any sinner does penance and is converted to the way of life through his justification (Luke 15, 10). The same happens when the just perform works of true virtue and merit new degrees of glory. Now that which happens among the heavenly inhabitants in the conversion of sinners and in the increase of merit of the just, has a counterpart in what happens with the demons at the sins of the just and the deeper falls of sinners; for no sin is committed by men, however small, in which the demons do not take pleasure; and those that attend to the business of tempting mortals immediately give notice to the demons in the eternal dungeons of their successes. There they enjoy them and record them for further use, both in order to press their claims before the divine Judge, and in order that their greater dominion and jurisdiction over sinners according to the measure of the offense may be publicly known.

In this manner they show their treacherous hate of men, whenever they succeed in deceiving them into sin by some momentary and apparent pleasure. But the Most High, who is just in all his works, ordained that also the conversion of sinners and the good works of the just should redound to the torment of the envious demons, since they rejoice so much at the perdition of man.

This sort of chastisement therefore causes great torments to all the demons; because by it they are not only confounded and oppressed in their mortal hatred of men, but by the victories of the saints and the conversion of sinners they are deprived of a great part of their power over those, whom they have drawn into sin by their plots. The new torments thus caused to them they seek to vent upon the damned in hell; and just as there is new joy in heaven at the penance and good works of sinners, so, for the same reason, there arise new confusion and misfortune in hell at the good works of the just. On such occasions, amid howls of despair, the demons inflict new accidental torments upon all that live in those dungeons of dismay and horror. Thus heaven and hell are affected at the same time in contrary ways by the conversion and justification of the sinner. Whenever the souls justify themselves through the Sacraments, especially by a truly sorrowful confession, it often happens that the devils for a long time dare not appear before the penitent, nor for many hours even presume to look at him, if he himself does not again encourage them by losing the divine favor and returning again to the dangers and occasions of sin; for then the demons quickly cast off the fear inspired by true penitence and justification.

In heaven there can be no sorrow or pain; but if there could be, then the saints would feel it on account

of nothing in the world so much as to see the justified souls falling back and losing grace, and the sinner drawing away further or making it impossible for him to regain divine favor. Sin of its own nature is just as powerful to move heaven to sorrow and pain as penance and virtue are to torment hell. Consider then, my dearest, in what dangerous ignorance mortals ordinarily live, depriving heaven of its joy in the justification of souls, hindering the external glory connected therewith, holding up the punishment due to the demons, and affording them on the contrary the joyful triumph of the fall and perdition of men. I desire that thou, as a faithful and prudent handmaid, be guided by thy higher knowledge, labor in compensating these evils. See that thou always approach the sacrament of Confession with fervor, esteem and veneration, and with a heartfelt sorrow for thy sins; for this Sacrament inspires the dragon with great terror and he exerts himself diligently to hinder souls by his deceits, in order to cause them to receive this Sacrament lukewarmly, out of mere habit, without sorrow, and without proper disposition. He is so eager in this matter not only because he wishes to cause the loss of souls, but also to avoid the fierce torments of being oppressed and confounded in his malignity by the true penance and justification of his escaped victims.

Besides all this, my friend, I wish to remind thee, that, although the infernal dragons are indeed the authors and masters of lies and although they deal with men only in order to mislead and ruin them by their deceits, yet these enemies, whenever in their meetings they confer among themselves in regard to misleading men, are forced to admit certain truths, which they know and cannot deny. They understand them, yet they communicate them to men, not in good faith, but obscured and

mixed with their own errors and falsehoods for the promotion of their own malicious designs. Since thou hast in this chapter, and in the whole course of this history, laid bare so many of their counsels, meetings and secrets, they are highly enraged against thee; for they flattered themselves, that these secrets and all their machinations would never come to the knowledge of men. Therefore they are furious to take vengeance upon thee; but the Most High will protect thee, if thou call upon Him to crush the head of the dragon. Do thou also beseech the divine clemency, that these advices and instructions may help to undeceive mortals, and by the divine light redound to their benefit. On thy own part do thou seek faithfully to correspond, as being under greater obligations to Him than all others living in the present age. For if, understanding their malice, thou dost not exert thyself to vanquish them with the assistance of the Most High and of his holy angels, thy ingratitude and the triumph of hell will grow in proportion to the favors thou hast received.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EXALTED DEEDS OF MOST HOLY MARY.

My daughter, the miracle of my being raised by the divine power to the sovereign throne of God in order that I might be consulted in the decrees of his divine wisdom and will, as described by thee in this chapter, is so great and extraordinary, that it exceeds all the capacity of man in this mortal life, and only in eternal glory and in beatific vision men shall recognize this sacrament with a most special joy of accidental glory. As this blessing and wonderful privilege was the effect and the reward of the most ardent charity with which I loved and do love the highest Good, and of the humility by which I considered myself as his slave, and as these virtues truly raised me to the throne of the Divinity and established me there even while yet in mortal flesh, I wish thee to have a more intimate knowledge of this mystery, which without a doubt was one of the most exalted wrought in me by the divine Omnipotence and which excited the greatest wonder in the angels and saints. Thy own admiration I wish thee to turn into a most vigilant care and into a most lively desire of imitating me and in following me in the virtues, by which I merited such favors.

Remember then, my dearest, that not only once, but many times was I raised to the throne of the most holy Trinity in mortal flesh during the time which intervened from the descent of the Holy Ghost to my Assumption to eternal glory. In what still remains for thee to

write of my life, thou wilt understand many other secrets connected with this privilege. And every time the puissant right hand of the Most High showed me this favor I experienced most copious effects of graces and gifts, according to the different ways of the divine Omnipotence and according to my, as it were, ineffable and boundless capacity of participating in the divine perfections. Sometimes in conferring upon me these favors the eternal Father said to me: "My Daughter and Spouse, thy love and fidelity bind Us to thee more than to any other creature and fill Us with the plenitude of satisfaction. Ascend to our throne, so that thou mayest be absorbed in the abyss of our Divinity and hold in this Trinity the fourth place, as far as is possible to a mere creature. Take possession of our glory, the treasures of which We place in thy hands. Thine are the heavens, the earth and all the abysses. Enjoy in this mortal life all the privileges of the blessed more fully than all the saints. Let all the nations and creatures, whom We have called into existence, serve thee; let the powers of heaven obey thee, let the supreme seraphim be subject to thee and let all blessings be thine own in our divine consistory. Be thou enlightened as to the great counsels of our wisdom and divine will and do thou take part, in our decrees, since thy will is most equitable and faithful. Penetrate into the reasons for whatever We resolve in justice and holiness; and let thy will and thy motives be one with ours in whatever We provide for our holy Church."

In such ineffable condescension the Most High governed my will, that He conformed it entirely to his own and that nothing was done in the Church without my decision, which was to be conformable to that of the Lord himself, since He knew the appropriate reasons

and motives for each of the decrees of his eternal counsels. I saw that it was not possible for me according to the common law to suffer all the labors and tribulations of the Church and especially not of the Apostles, as I had desired. This charitable desire, though it was impossible of execution, was not a deviation from the divine will, but was given to me by God as a token and witness of the boundless love with which I loved Him; for it was on account of the love of the Lord toward men, that I desired to take upon myself the labors and sufferings of all men. And because on my part this love was true and my heart was prepared to fulfill this charity, and as I truly grieved not to be able to suffer for all, therefore it was so acceptable in the eyes of the Lord and He rewarded it as if I had really fulfilled it in deed. Hence arose my compassion for the martyrdom and torments of the Apostles and the others persecuted for Christ; in all of them and with all of them I was afflicted and tormented, and in some measure died their death. Such was the love I had for my faithful children; and, with the exception of suffering), it is the same now, although Christians do not suspect or know how much my charity deserves their gratitude.

I received these ineffable blessings from the right hand of my divine Son at the time when I was raised from the world and placed at his side, partaking of his exaltation and glory in the full measure possible to a mere creature. The hidden decrees and sacraments of the infinite Wisdom were first made manifest to the most holy humanity of my Lord, which, being united to the eternal Word, was the admirable medium of the Divinity. Through this humanity in another manner, they were communicated to me; for the union of his humanity with the Word is immediate and substantial and hence it

participates intrinsically of the Divinity and of its decrees, in a manner corresponding to the substantial and personal union. I however partook of this favor by another wonderful and unexampled process, considering that I was a mere creature and not having the divine nature; in a manner similar to the most holy humanity and as one, who, next to the Mangod, was closest to the Divinity. Thou canst not at present understand more or penetrate deeper into this mystery. But the blessed understood it, each one according to his degree of heavenly science; and all of them understood this conformity and similitude of myself with my divine son, as well as the difference between me and Him. All of this was, and is now, to them a motive for new canticles of glory and praise of the Omnipotent; for this was one of the great wonders wrought in me by the powerful right hand of God.

In order that thou mayest increase the force of thy holy affections and desires as well of nature as of grace, although they may not be within the possibility of execution, I will reveal to thee another secret. It is this: when I perceived the effects of the Redemption in the justification of souls by the operation of grace through contrition, or through Baptism and the other Sacraments, I conceived such an esteem for them, that I was filled with a holy emulation and desire to participate in their effects. As I had no sins of which I could be cleansed and justified, I could not partake of their effects in the same degree as the sinners who received them. But because I wept over their sins more than they all, and as I thanked the Lord for these blessings so liberally conferred upon them, I gained more graces than were necessary to justify all the children of Adam. So much the Most High permitted Himself to be indebted to my works and such was their merit of grace in the eyes of God.

And now, my daughter, consider under what obligations thou art after being informed and enlightened concerning these great and venerable secrets. Let not these talents lie idle, nor waste or despise such great blessings of the Lord; follow me in perfect imitation of all my doings manifested to thee. In order that thou mayest nourish the flame of divine love, ceaselessly bear in mind how my most holy Son and I in this mortal life sighed and ardently yearned for the salvation of all the children of Adam and wept over the eternal perdition incurred by so many in their deceitful and counterfeit pleasures. In this charitable zeal I wish thee to distinguish thyself very much, as my daughter and disciple, and as a most faithful spouse of my Son, who delivered Himself to the death of the Cross on this very account. For if the force of this love did not take away my life, it was because the Lord miraculously preserved it; and this is the love which placed me upon the throne of God and made me partaker of the counsels of the most blessed Trinity. If thou, my dear, shalt be as diligent and fervent in imitating me and as anxious to obey me, as I expect of thee, I assure thee of a participation in the favors shown to my servant James; I will hasten to thy aid in thy tribulations; I will govern thee, as I have so often promised thee; and more than this, the Most High will be more liberal with thee than all thy highest wishes can ever hope to compass.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TREACHERY OF HELL.

My daughter, thou knowest, that not without some mysterious reason I have in the course of this history so many times shown thee the secret machinations and treacherous counsels of hell for the ruin of mankind, and the furious and restless wrath with which Lucifer seeks to encompass it. In this assault hell misses no opening, no occasion, and lets no stone unturned, nor forgets any path, any state or person in laying snares for their fall and in trying to find ways so much the more dangerous and deceitful, the more they find their victims desirous of eternal life and of the friendship of God. Besides these general warnings thou hast often been shown the council-meetings and the plots laid against thee. It is important for all the children of the Church to escape the ignorance in which they live concerning the dangers besetting their eternal salvation; for they do not know or take notice, that their ignorance of these secrets is the chastisement of the sin of Adam, and how, after being enlightened, they again lose it and become more unworthy of it than before through their own sins. Many of the faithful are as oblivious and careless, as if there were no demons to persecute and deceive them; and if they sometimes think of them, it is superficially and lightly, falling immediately back into their forgetfulness, which for many of them means no less than eternal punishment. If at all times and in all places, in all their works and on all occasions the demons set their snares, it is but just and proper that Christians on their part take not one step without asking divine light to see and avoid the danger.

But as the children of Adam are so torpid in regard to this matter, they perform scarcely one work without being assailed by the infernal serpent and infected by his poison. Thus they accumulate sins upon sins, evil upon evil, irritating the divine justice and shutting out mercy.

In these dangers I exhort thee, my daughter, that just as the fury and watchfulness of hell against thee is greater, so also, with the divine grace, thy watchfulness be more earnest and continual in order to vanquish those astute enemies. Consider what I did, when I saw the designs of Lucifer to persecute me and the holy Church: I multiplied my prayers, tears, sighs and supplications; and when the demons tried to avail themselves of the help of Herod and the Jews of Jerusalem. Although I needed not fear the least for myself in the city and desired to remain there, I nevertheless gave up my desire of staying in order to furnish an example of caution and of obedience by flying from danger and by yielding to the will of saint John. Thou art not strong and art in great danger from creatures; and, what is still more, thou art my disciple, and hast my life and works for thy model. Therefore I desire thee to fly from danger as soon as thou seest it; and if necessary, avoid it at the cost of the greatest sensible pain, always acting under obedience, which thou must look upon as thy guiding-star and as thy support against the danger of a fall. Cautiously examine, whether beneath some apparent work of piety there lurk not the snares of the demon and see that thou do not suffer evil in doing good to others. Do not trust to thy own judgment, although it may seem good and secure to thee, never hesitate to obey in all things, seeing that I by obedience safely passed through many labors and difficulties.

Renew also the loving desire of following my footsteps and of imitating me perfectly, so as to finish what still remains of my history, at the same time writing it in thy heart. Run on the way of humility and obedience after the order of my life and virtues, and if thou obey me (as I have wished and so often asked of thee) I will assist thee as my daughter in thy necessities and tribulations. My divine Son shall execute his designs in regard to thee, as thou hast desired before beginning this work; his promises so often repeated to thee will be fulfilled and thou wilt be blessed by his powerful right hand. Praise and magnify the Most High for the favor shown to my servant James in Saragossa, for the temple there erected before my Assumption into heaven, and for all the wonders concerning it. Remember that this was the first temple of the evangelical law and was most pleasing to the will of the most blessed Trinity.

BOOK EIGHT

Lessons of the Queen in Connection with her Life, from her Visit in Saragossa to her Coronation in Heaven.

CHAPTER I.

DISORDERLY AFFECTIONS.

My daughter, in the events of this chapter thou wilt find much guidance for a perfect life. Consider then, that just as God is the beginning and origin of all the being and faculties of creatures, so also, according to right reason, He is to be their sole last end; for if man has received all without meriting it, then he likewise owes all to Him who has given it gratis; and if men have received all in order to produce results, then all the results belong to the Creator and not to the creatures. This truth, which I understood fully and pondered in my heart, urged me to prostrate myself and lower myself to the very dust in adoring the immutable being of God. I reflected how I was created out of nothing, formed of earth, and in the presence of God I annihilated myself, acknowledging Him as the Creator, to whom I owed my life, being and motion (Acts 17, 28), and protesting that without Him I was nothing, and that all was due to Him as the one beginning and end of all creation. In the light of this truth, all that I did and suffered seemed little; and although I ceased not to do good, I continually longed and sighed to do and suffer still more. Never was my heart satisfied, because I still found myself a debtor, getting poorer and ever

more indebted. This state of mind is very well founded in right reason and still more on faith, and this debt is manifest and common to all men, if they would only direct their attention toward it. But amid the universal forgetfulness of men I wish, my daughter, that thou solicitously imitate me in the practices and exercises described to thee, and especially that thou humble thyself to the dust and abase thyself in proportion as the Most High raises thee up by the favors and blessings of his right hand. The example of my humility thou wilt see clearly evident in the special favors, as for instance, when He commanded a temple to be built, in which I was to be honored and invoked even during my mortal life. This and other favors humbled me beyond all human imagination. Therefore, if I thus humbled myself after performing such great things, consider how much more thou must do it in response to such great liberality of the Lord toward thee and after such niggardly correspondence on thy part.

I wish also, my daughter, that thou imitate me in being very careful to practice poverty of spirit concerning the use of necessities and comforts, offered thee by thy sister-nuns or by thy well-wishers. Choose and accept only the most poor and most ordinary, the most undesirable and humble things for thy use; for otherwise thou canst not imitate me in the spirit, in which without ostentation I refused all comforts and good things of this life offered to me by the faithful of Jerusalem, and of which I accepted only what was absolutely necessary during my sojourn in Ephesus. In the exercise of this virtue is contained much that will make human beings happy, while the deceived and blind worldlings please themselves in pursuing what is entirely opposed to this virtue and truth.

Seek also to guard thyself from another very common mistake: namely, that by which men, instead of

acknowledging that all the goods of body and soul belong to the Lord, nevertheless appropriate all of them to themselves and consider them so much their own, that they not only refuse to offer them freely to their Creator, but even, if at any time they must part with them, lament and are aggrieved over their loss, as if they had been injured or as if God had treated them unjustly. With such a disorderly affection parents are wont to love their children, and children their parents, married men their wives, and wives their husbands, and all of them, their possessions, honor, health and other temporal goods, while many souls thus love even the spiritual goods; and they go so far in this disorderly love, that they have no measure in their sorrow, when they lose them. Though it be impossible to recover them, they live in unrest and dejection, passing from the disorder of their sensible affection to the disorder of their reason and to unjust complaint. Hence they dare not only condemn the rulings of divine Providence and lose the merit of sacrificing what is the Lord's, but they wish to have it understood, that they esteem the possession of these transitory goods as their highest aim, and that, if they were permitted, they would live many ages content with these apparent and perishing things.

None of the children of Adam can have a love greater, or one equal to that, with which I loved my divine Son and my spouse saint Joseph; yet this love was so well ordered while I lived in their company, that I willingly sacrificed their conversation and intercourse during all the time in which I was deprived of their presence. This conformity and resignation I desire thee to imitate, whenever something is wanting to thee, which thou shouldst love in God; for outside of God thou art permitted to love nothing. The anxious desire of seeing the supreme Good and of loving God eternally and forever

in heaven must alone be perpetual in thee. For this happiness thou must sigh in tears from thy inmost heart ; for it thou must gladly suffer all the hardships and afflictions of this mortal life. Thou must live in these aspirations in such a way, that from now on in trying to make thyself worthy of God thou be anxious to suffer all that thou hearest or understandest as having been suffered by the saints. But remember these desires of suffering and these aspirations and attempts to see God are to be of such a kind, that thy suffering becomes real through thy sorrow at not being able actually to encounter actual torments and at not being found worthy of bearing all the martyrdom thou thus desirest. In thy flights of desire to arrive at the beatific vision thou must permit no other lower motive to intermingle, such as the relief afforded by the joy of God's vision against the hardships of this life ; for to desire the vision of the highest Good, is not love of God, but love of self and of one's own comfort, and cannot merit reward in the eyes of the all-penetrating and all-weighting omnipotent God. But if thou do all these things sincerely and in all perfection, as a faithful servant and spouse of my divine Son, desiring to see Him in order to love Him, praise Him, and never to offend Him eternally, and if thou covet all labors and sufferings only for these ends, believe me and assure thyself, that thou wilt draw Us to thee and that thou wilt arrive at the kind of love thou continually desirest ; since precisely for this purpose, We are so liberal with thee.

CHAPTER II.

THE POWER OF MARY.

My daughter, thy astonishment at the singular favor conferred by me on my servant James at his death, affords me an occasion to tell thee of a privilege confirmed to me by the Almighty at the time when I bore the soul of the Apostle to heaven. Although I have already on other occasions revealed to thee something of this secret, thou shalt now understand it more fully in order to increase thy filial devotion toward me. When I brought to heaven the happy soul of James, the eternal Father spoke to me in the hearing of all the blessed: "My Daughter and Dove, chosen for my acceptance from all the creatures, let my courtiers, angels and saints understand that, for the exaltation of my holy name, for thy glory and for the benefit of mortals, I now give thee my royal word, that if men, in the hour of their death invoke thee and call upon thee with affection in imitation of my servant James, soliciting thy intercession with me, I will bend to them in clemency and look upon them with eyes of fatherly mercy; I will defend and guard them against the dangers of that last hour; I will ward off the cruel enemies that seek the perdition of souls in that hour; I will furnish them through thee with great helps for resisting these enemies and gaining grace, if they wish to avail themselves of this help; and thou shalt present to Me their souls to be rewarded by my liberal hands."

For this privilege the whole triumphant Church, and I with it, sang hymns of thanks and praise to the Most

High. Although the angels have the office of presenting the souls when they issue from the captivity of mortal life, to the tribunal of the just Judge, yet I have this same privilege in a more exalted degree than is granted to any other creature by the Omnipotent; for I possess it by another title and by a particular and supereminent right. Many times I make use of this privilege and I have done so with some of the Apostles. Since I see thee desirous of knowing how thou canst obtain from me this favor so precious to the soul, I answer thy pious wish by exhorting thee to take care lest thou make thyself unworthy by ingratitude and forgetfulness; and before all, to gain for thyself that inviolate purity, which I expect of thee and of the other souls. For the great love which I owe and cherish toward God, obliges me, with sincerest affection and charity to demand of all men the observance of his holy law and the preservation of their friendship and grace with God. This thou must prefer before thy life and be willing to die rather than offend thy God and highest Good.

I wish that thou set about obeying me, act out my instructions, and work with all thy might to imitate what thou seest and writest of me; that thou permit no intermission in thy love, nor forget for one moment the heartfelt affection thou owest to the liberal mercy of thy Lord; that thou be thankful for all his blessings and to me, since thy obligations are far beyond the power of fulfillment by thee in this mortal life. Be faithful in thy correspondence, fervent in thy devotion, ready to do what is most holy and perfect. Let thy heart expand and do not narrow it in pusillanimity, following the instigations of the devil. Extend thy hand to strong and powerful deeds, filled with confidence in the Lord; be not oppressed by adversities, thus impeding the will of the Lord in thee, and the high ends of his glory. Retain vivid faith and hope,

even in the greatest assaults and temptations. In all this let the example of my servants James and Peter assist thee, and the certain knowledge of possessing through me the happy security of those who live under the protection of the Most High. In this confidence and in devotion to me James obtained the singular favor I showed him in his martyrdom; trusting in me he undertook immense labors in order to reach that crown. In this confidence saint Peter remained so tranquil and content in his prison-chains, nor lost for a moment the serenity of his soul. Thus he merited at the same time, that my divine Son and myself should plan his liberation. Of such favors the children of darkness make themselves unworthy, because they build all their hopes on that which is visible and on their diabolical earthly astuteness. Raise up thy heart, my daughter, and withdraw it from these deceits; aspire to that which is most pure and holy, since with thee shall be the arm of the Almighty, who wrought such great wonders in Me.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAMENTABLE DEFECTIONS IN THE CHURCH.

My daughter, when in the course of this history I so often call thy attention to the lamentable state of the world and to that of the holy Church in which thou livest, and when I so often express my maternal solicitude that thou imitate me, remember, my dearest, that I have great reasons for obliging thee to lament with me and for wishing thee to weep over that which I bewailed in my mortal life; and which would afflict me in my present state, if in it I were capable of sorrow. I assure thee, soul, thou hast reached times, in which thou oughtest to shed tears of blood because of the calamities coming over the children of Adam. Since thou canst not at one and the same time attain a full knowledge of them all, I remind thee of what from my place in heaven I see going on in the whole world among the believers of the holy faith. Turn then thy eyes upon those multitudes and behold the greater part of the children of Adam in the darkness and errors of unbelief, rushing without hope of salvation to eternal perdition. Behold also the children of the faith and of the Church, how heedless and forgetful of this damage they continue to be, so that there is none who seem to deplore it. For in contempt of their own salvation, they care not about that of others and, their faith being dead and their love extinct, they sorrow not for the loss of souls created by God and redeemed by the blood of the incarnate Word.

All are the children of the eternal Father who is

in heaven (Matth 23, 9) and all are obliged to have a care of their brethren according to each one's condition. This obligation rests more especially upon the children of the Church, who can live up to it by their prayers and supplications. But this duty lies still more directly upon those who have influence, upon those who are nourished by the Christian faith, and who enjoy more of the benefits of the liberal hand of the Almighty. Those who through the law of Christ are favored with temporal advantages and who make use of them for the service and the delights of the flesh, are they who, as the powerful, are to be more powerfully tormented (Matth 23, 9). If the pastors and the chiefs of the house of the Lord seek only a life of ease, without caring to engage in true earnest labor, they will make themselves accountable for the ruin of the flock of Christ and for the carnage brought on by the infernal wolves. O my daughter, into what a lamentable state has the Christian people been cast by the powerful, by the pastors, and by the wicked ministers, whom God has given them in his secret judgments! O what confusion and chastisements await them! Before the tribunal of the just Judge they will have no excuse; since the Catholic truth undeceives them, their conscience loudly protests, while they wilfully remain deaf to all warnings.

The cause of God remains neglected and without a champion; his possessions, which are the souls, are left without increase; all as it were look but to their own interest and preservation, each one according to his own diabolical cunning and according to his state of life. Truth is obscured, flattery raises its voice, avarice is unbridled, the blood of Christ is trodden under foot, the fruits of the Redemption are held in contempt; no one wishes to risk his own comfort or interest in order to

save what has cost the Savior his blood and life. Even the friends of God are influenced by the evils; for they do not make use of their charity and its holy liberty as they ought; and most of them allow themselves to be overcome by their cowardice and content themselves with working for themselves alone, forsaking the common cause of the souls of others. Hence thou mayest understand, my daughter, that now, after the evangelical Church has been established by my divine Son and fertilized by his own blood, those unhappy times have come, of which the Lord himself complains through his holy Prophets, saying: what the palmerworm hath left the locust has eaten, and what the locust left the bruchus consumed, and the residue is destroyed by the mildew; (Joel 1, 4) and in order to gather some fruits from his vineyard, the Lord goes about like the gleaner after the vintage, who seeks some remaining grape, or some olive, which is not dried up, or carried away by the demons (Is. 24, 13).

Tell me now, my daughter, how is it possible, if thou still hast a true love for my divine Son and for me, that thou find consolation or rest in thy heart at the sight of the loss of souls, which He redeemed by his blood and I have sought with blood-mingled tears? Even today, if I could shed them, I would begin to do so with new weeping and compassion; and since it is not possible for me now to weep over the dangers threatening the Church, I wish that thou do it and that thou spurn consolation in a misfortune so calamitous and so worthy of lament. Weep bitterly then, and lose not the merit of such a sorrow; and let it be so deep, that thou findest no relief except in affliction for the sake of the Lord whom thou lovest. Think of what I did, in order to stave off the damnation of Herod and to prevent it for those who wish

to avail themselves of my intercession. In the beatific vision I pray without ceasing for the salvation of my clients. Let not the labors and tribulations sent to thee by my divine Son intimidate thee from helping they brethren and acquiring them for the possession of Christ. Amidst the injuries done to Him by the children of Adam, do thou labor to recompense them in some measure by the purity of thy soul, which I desire shall be rather that of an angel than of an earthborn woman. Fight the battles of the Lord against his enemies and in his name and mine, crush their head, reign over their pride and cast them into hell. Do thou also counsel the ministers of Christ with whom thou conversest, to use their power in doing the same, to defend the souls in lively faith and, in them, the honor and glory of the Lord; for thus shall they repress and vanquish them with divine power.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUSES OF THE DEVIL.

My daughter, the pride of the demon includes a desire which the devil himself knows is absurd: namely, his desire that the saints serve and obey him as god, and thus make him like to God in this respect. But the fulfillment of this desire is impossible, since it implies in itself a contradiction. The essence of holiness consists in the creature's conforming itself to the divine will, loving God above all things in obedience, whereas sin consists in deviating from this rule by the love of some other object and obedience to the demon. But the uprightness of true virtue is so conformable to reason, that even the devil cannot ignore it. On this account he seeks, if possible, to cause the good to fall in order to satisfy his wrath and envy at not being able to draw them to his service, and satiate his intense desire of preventing the glory of God in his saints, which he cannot appropriate for himself. Hence also his violent efforts to fell to the earth some cedar of Lebanon in sanctity and to enslave those who have been the servants of the Most High. With this in view he exerts all his ingenuity and care, and often he seeks to induce his devotees to practice some of the moral virtues, even if only in appearance, as is done by hypocrites and as we have seen in the virgins of Diana. He hopes thereby to have his share in what God loves and desires, and to sully and pervert what the Lord wishes to use as a channel for his purity.

Remember, my daughter, that the byways, snares

and schemes of this serpent for the fall of the just are so numerous, that without the special favor of the Most High the souls could never know them, much less overcome them or escape his treacherous plots. In order to deserve this protection of the Lord, God wishes the creature on its part never to relax in vigilance, nor trust in its own strength, nor ever be remiss in asking and desiring this help; for without it, man can do nothing and will soon perish. What especially draws down the divine clemency is fervor of the heart and promptness in divine worship, and above all, persevering obedience and humility, which give stability and fortitude against the assaults of the enemy, I wish to impress upon thy mind, not for thy discouragement, but for thy advice and warning, that the works of the just, to which this serpent does not impart some of its poison, are very rare. For usually he tries with utmost subtlety to excite some terrestrial passion or inclination, by which he secretly deflects or perverts the intentions, preventing man from acting purely for God and for the legitimate ends of true virtue. Since the cockle of some foreign affection, either in part or the whole, is thus sown with the wheat, it is difficult to detect, unless souls strip themselves of all earthly inclinations and examine their works in the divine light.

Thou art well warned, my daughter, against this peril and against the ceaseless efforts of the demons, which are more violent against thee than against other souls. Let not thy vigilance be less than his, and do not trust in the mere appearance of good intention in thy works; for, though appearances must always be good and upright, yet this is not sufficient, nor can the creature always discern them. The demon often deceives the soul under the cloak of a good intention, proposing some apparently or remotely good end, in order to lead

them into proximate danger; and thus it happens, that, enmeshed in this danger, the men never attain the good which drew them into action. At other times he prevents the soul, under cloak of this good intention, from examining into circumstances, which vitiate the act by imprudence in the performance. Then again, under the outwardly good intention, are often hidden the earthly passions and inclinations, which dominate the heart. Hence, amid so many dangers, thou canst find safety only in scrutinizing thy actions by the light which the Lord infuses into the superior part of thy soul; by it thou wilt know how to distinguish the good from the evil, the truth from the falsehood, the bitter from the sweet, passions from right reason (Jer. 15, 19). Then the divine light in thee will not be obscured by darkness, the eye will be single and will purify the body of thy actions (Matth. 6, 22), and thou wilt be entirely and in all things pleasing to thy Lord and to Me.

CHAPTER V.

THE SACREDNESS OF VOWS.

My daughter, I desire that thou continually renew the remembrance of what I have told thee of these sacred mysteries of my life; for it is not my will that thou be only an insensible instrument for manifesting them to the Church, but rather that thou be the one, who before and above all others shall draw fruit from this new blessing by practicing my teachings and following my example. For this purpose has the Lord called thee, and for it have I chosen thee as my daughter and disciple. Since thou hast duly noticed my act of humility in not opening the letter of saint Peter without consent of my son John, I wish to dilate further upon the lesson contained in this instance. I desire thee to notice that in those two virtues, humility and obedience, which are the foundation of Christain perfection, there is nothing small, and all that pertains to them is most pleasing to the Most High and draws down the most abundant reward of his generous mercy and justice.

Consider then, my dearest, that, just as in the present condition of man nothing is more contrary to his nature than the subjection of one's will to that of another, so nothing is more necessary than this subjection for the bending of that stiff-necked pride, which the demon seeks to stir up in all the children of Adam. Hence the enemies labor sleeplessly to induce men to follow their own judgment and will. Thereby the devils gain many triumphs and lead many souls into diverse roads of de-

struction; for in all states and conditions of life the demon seeks to instill this poison into mortals, secretly soliciting them to follow their own judgment and refuse to obey the laws and the will of their superiors, but rather to despise and rebel against it, perverting the order of divine Providence for the well-ordering of all things. And because men overthrow this government of the Lord, the world is filled with confusion and darkness, created things are thrown out of order and subjected to opposite force without regard or attention to God and his laws.

But though all this damage is odious in the eyes of the supreme Governor and Lord, yet it is especially displeasing to Him in religious, who, being bound by the vows of religion, seek to widen these restrictions or altogether free themselves from their obligations. I am not now speaking of those who transgress their rules in open daring or break their vows in small or in great things; this is nothing else than a dreadful temerity entailing eternal damnation. But, in order that they may not incur such a danger. I wish to exhort those who seek their salvation in religion, to guard themselves against entertaining opinions or explanations for relaxing the obedience due to their superiors in the name of God, or against trying to determine what liberties they might take without committing sin by infringing on obedience and their other vows or against studying whether they may not act according to their own judgment in certain matters great or small. Such disquisitions are never made for the better observance of vows, but always in order to stifle the remorse of conscience in breaking them. I remind them, that the demons seek to induce them to swallow these poisonous gnats, in order that, little by little, after being accustomed to those that seem insig-

nificant, they may arrive at swallowing the camels of the more serious sins. Those that continually hover about the entrances to mortal sins, will, to say the least, make themselves liable to a strict inquiry by the Judge and thus receive the smallest reward. For they have studied all their lives to give to the Lord the least in their power to oblige Him.

These attempts to explain away the binding force of the love of God, tending to remodel it according to the inclinations of the flesh, are very abominable to my divine Son and to myself; for it is a sign of great disaffection to obey the divine law out of necessity, making it apparent, that only the fear of punishment urges one on, and not love toward Him who commands, and that nothing would be done, if no punishment were in store. Many times, in the effort to avoid humiliation at the hands of the immediate superior, the subject appeals to the higher authority and thus asks for exemptions from those who have only a general information and cannot know or understand his particular needs or danger. It cannot be denied, that this is still a kind of obedience; but it is also certain, that it is a shift for greater liberty, diminishes the reward and incurs danger; since without doubt it is more meritorious to obey and subject oneself to the inferior authority, to those in a lower condition, and to those less favorably disposed to one's own views and inclinations. I learned no such doctrines in the school of my divine Son, nor did I show them in practice; for all things I sought the permission of those I held as superiors, never being without them as thou hast seen. Even for opening and reading the letter of saint Peter, the head of the Church, I waited to find out the will of his inferior, who was my more immediate superior.

My daughter, I do not wish thee to follow the teachings of those who seek liberty and license in following their own inclinations; but I choose thee and conjure thee to imitate me and walk the secure path of perfection. Hankering after dispensations and exemptions perverts the christian and the religious life. At all times thou must live in humble and obedient subjection, and thou must not hold thyself excused therefrom on account of being a superior, for thou hast thy confessors and superiors. If sometimes in their absence thou canst not act in obedience, ask counsel and obey one of thy subjects. For thee, all of them should be as superiors; and let not this seem strange to thee; since thou art the least of the human born and shouldst consider thyself so, humiliating thyself beneath them all in order to be my true follower, my disciple and daughter. Besides this thou must punctually tell me thy faults twice a day and ask my permission for all that thou art to do during each day, confessing also every day the sins thou committest. I shall exhort thee, and command thee what is proper, both through myself and through my ministers of the Lord; and thou must not shrink to tell many others of thy ordinary faults, in order that in all things and before all men thou humiliate thyself in the eyes of the Lord and in mine. This science, hidden to the world and the flesh, I desire thee to learn and impart to thy nuns. In teaching thee this lesson I wish to reward thee for thy labor in writing my life; for by these instructions in so important a doctrine I wish to impress thee, that, if thou wishest to imitate me as thou shouldst, thou must communicate or speak with no one, nor undertake anything, nor write letters, nor move about, nor allow any thoughts (if possible), except in obedience to me and to those who govern thee.

The worldly and carnal men call these virtues impertinent and vain observances; but their ignorant pride will have its punishment when, in the presence of the Judge, truths will be revealed; then will be seen who were the ignorant and the wise, and those will be rewarded, who as true servants have been faithful as well in small as in greater things (Matth. 25, 21); when there is no remedy left, the foolish ones will know the damage done by their carnal prudence.

As thou wert moved to a certain envy on learning that I myself governed that congregation of women at Ephesus, I now advise thee to have no such feeling. Remember that thou and thy nuns have chosen me for your Superior and special Patroness in order that I might govern you as your Queen and Lady; and I desire them to know, that I have accepted this office and have constituted myself in it forever on condition, that they be perfect in their vocation and very faithful to their Lord, my divine Son, to whom I have assigned them as his spouses. Remind them often of this, so that they watch over themselves and retire from the world, despising it with all their hearts; that as my daughters they do not degenerate, living in recollection and peace; that they follow and execute the doctrines which I have given thee in this history for thee and for them and that they hold it in high veneration, gratefully writing it in their hearts. For in having presented to them my life for the rule and government of their souls, as it is now written by thy hands, I am fulfilling my office as Mother and Superior, in order that as subjects and as daughters they may tread in my footsteps, imitate my virtues and correspond with me in faithful love.

Another important lesson canst thou draw from this chapter, namely: those that do not obey willingly,

when any adverse circumstance turns up in what is commanded, will immediately be cast down, afflicted and disturbed, and, in order to justify their impatience, they will blame the one that commands, and complain about him either to his superiors or to others, as if he that commands were responsible for the untoward accidents happening to the inferior, or as if he had it in his power to direct the government of the whole world according to the wishes of his subject. Indeed, many times God, in reward for complete submission, raises hindrances in order that the one who obeys may increase his merit and crown, at other times he punishes those who show any repugnance in obeying by withholding full success; and all these accidents can in nowise be blamed upon the superior, who commands. The Lord simply said: He who hears you, and who obeys you, hears and obeys Me (Luke 10, 16). The labor connected with obedience always redounds to the benefit of those who obey; if they do not profit by their obedience, it is no fault of the one that commands. I made no complaints against saint Peter for asking me to come from Ephesus to Jerusalem, although I suffered so much on the voyage; but I asked him pardon for not having fulfilled his command more expeditiously. Never show any grievance or sign of being displeased toward thy superiors, for this is a very ugly spirit and such liberty will destroy all the merit of thy obedience. Look upon them with reverence, as taking the place of Christ, and thy merit will be abundant; follow my footsteps, my example and my doctrine, and thou wilt be perfect in all things.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT WARFARE.

My daughter, in the constancy and invincible fortitude with which I vanquished the demons, thou hast one of the most urgent motives for persevering in grace and acquiring great crowns. The human nature and that of the angels (even though they be devils) are subject to contrary and opposite conditions; for the spiritual nature is indefatigable, and that of mortals weak and so prone to fatigue, that it soon tires and succumbs in labor. As soon as it finds any difficulty in the practice of virtue it is discouraged and turns back; what it pursues with pleasure on one day, it contemns the next; what seemed agreeable today, it finds hard tomorrow; now it wishes, then again it does not wish; sometimes it is fervent, sometimes lukewarm. But the demon is never fatigued or weakened in his efforts at tempting souls. The Almighty, however, is not wanting in his providence; for He limits and restrains the power of the demons, so that they cannot pass the measure set for them, nor exert all their indefatigable powers for the persecution of souls. On the other hand He supports the weakness of men, giving them grace and strength to resist and overcome their enemies on the prescribed battleground.

Hence the inconstancy of souls in virtuously maintaining their position during temptation and in not bearing with fortitude and patience the inconveniences of doing good and fighting against the demons, is not excusable. The bent of passion, drawing man toward

the sensible and pleasurable, suddenly presents itself across the path of duty and the demons, with diabolical astuteness, seek to exaggerate the hardship and disagreeableness of mortification, representing it as dangerous to health and life. Thus he deludes innumerable souls to precipitate themselves from one abyss to another. In this thou hast before thy eyes, my daughter, a very common aberration of the worldly-minded, but which is very abominable in the sight of the Lord and myself. Hence it is, that many men are weak, wavering and indisposed toward the practice of virtue or penitential mortification for their sins. And the very ones who are so weak in doing good, are strong in doing evil. In the service of the devil they are constant and are ready to undergo much more difficult and arduous tasks in sinning, than the law of God commands for the practice of virtue. They show themselves tardy and imbecile in the work of saving their souls, eager and strong to load upon themselves eternal damnation.

This damage also those who profess a life of perfection are wont in part to incur, if they unduly consider the hardships attached to such a life. Drawn into this deception, they either hinder their advance in perfection or afford the devil many victories in temptation. In order that thou, my daughter, mayest not incur this danger, thou shouldst consider the fortitude and constancy with which I resisted Lucifer and all hell, and the magnanimity with which I despised his illusions and temptations, not permitting myself to be disturbed, or to pay any attention to them; for this is the best way to overcome his haughty pride. Nor was I ever led by temptation to remissness in my labors or in my exercises; but I augmented them, together with my prayers, petitions and tears, as is necessary in the time of battle with

those enemies. Hence I exhort thee to do the same in eager watchfulness; because thy temptations are not of the ordinary kind, but are directed against thee in highest malice and astuteness. Of this I have warned thee many times and this experience teaches thee.

Since thou hast noticed the great terror caused to the demons at perceiving the sacramental Lord resting in my bosom, I wish to call thy attention to two things. First, that for the overthrow of hell and for causing fear in the demons, all the holy Sacraments of the Church are most powerful means; but above all the holy sacrament of the Eucharist. This was one of the hidden purposes of the Lord my Son, in the institution of this sovereign mystery and of the other Sacraments. If in our time men do not ordinarily feel these powerful effects, it is because in the frequency of the reception of the Sacraments much of the veneration and estimation in receiving them has been lost. But do not doubt, that souls who frequent them with devotion and piety, are formidable to the demons and that they exercise great power and dominion over them in the same way as thou hast seen and described it of me. The explanation of this fact is: that this divine fire, in the pure souls, finds itself as it were in its own element. In me it was active to the limit of possibility in a mere creature, and therefore I inspired such terror to the demons.

In further proof of what I said, I wish secondly to inform thee, that these blessings were not to have an end with me; for in proportion God has wrought the same effects in other souls. In our own times it has happened that, in order to vanquish the demon, God showed and opposed to him a soul bearing within it the sacramental species and thereby so humiliated and annihilated the dragon, that for many days he dared not

approach this soul and begged the Omnipotent not to be shown any soul bearing within it holy Communion. On another occasion Lucifer, in conjunction with some heretics and other bad Christians, schemed to do severe harm to these Spanish kingdoms; and if God had not cut them short through this same person, the whole of Spain would now be lost and in the hands of the enemies. The divine clemency interfered for its defense by showing this person to the devil and his ministers after Communion. In their terrors the demons dropped their malicious designs for the immediate destruction of all Spain. I will not tell thee who this person was; for it is not necessary, and I reveal this secret to thee for no other purpose than to show how favorably the Almighty looks upon a soul which tries to merit its favors and worthily receives Him in holy Communion; and how He manifested Himself liberal and powerful not only to me, on account of my dignity and sanctity of Mother, but how He wishes also in other souls to be known and glorified as relieving the needs of the Church according to time and occasion.

From this thou wilt understand, that, in the same proportion as the demons fear the souls that worthily receive holy Communion and other fortifying Sacraments, so they exert all their powers to cause those souls to fall and to hinder them from accumulating all this strength of the Lord against them. Labor then against these tireless and astute enemies and seek to imitate me in fortitude. I desire also that thou hold in great veneration the councils of the Church and all such gatherings, and whatever is resolved and established by them; for the Holy Ghost assists at these councils and He fulfills his promise, that He will be with those who gather together in his name (Matth. 8, 20). Hence what is thus ordained and commanded must be obeyed. Al-

though in our times no visible signs of the assistance of the Holy Ghost occur in such councils, yet He does not fail to govern them invisibly; for signs and wonders are not any more so necessary as in the first beginnings of the Church. Such as are necessary are not withheld by the Lord. For all these blessings exalt and praise his liberal kindness and mercy, and especially for those which He conferred on me during my mortal life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT HIDDEN WARFARE.

My daughter, with the rebellion of Lucifer and his demons in heaven have commenced the battles between the kingdom of light and that of darkness, between Jerusalem and Babylon; and these battles will not cease to the end of the world. The Captain and Head of the children of light is the incarnate Word, as the Author of holiness and grace; and Lucifer, as the author of sin and perdition, has constituted himself as the leader of the children of darkness. Each one of these chieftains defends his followers and seeks to increase his reign and the number of his adherents. Christ seeks to draw men to Himself by the truths of his divine faith, by the favors and gifts of his grace, by the holiness of his virtues, by his consolations in labors and by the certain hope of his promised happiness, commanding his angels to accompany, to console and defend them until they should be able to bring them to heaven; Lucifer, on the other hand, gains his followers by lies, deceits and treachery, by the allurements of ignominious and abominable vices, by darkness and confusion; he threatens them in this life like a tyrant, afflicting them relentlessly and depriving them of all consolation; while in the next life he holds in readiness for them eternal and horrible torments, which he himself and through his demons shall inflict upon them with inhuman cruelty as long as God is God.

But alas! in spite of this truth, so infallible and so well known to mortals, in spite of the infinite differ-

ence of the recompense, how few, my daughter, are the soldiers that follow Christ, as their legitimate Lord, as their King, their Chief, and their model; and how numerous are those that band with Lucifer, who gives them no existence, no life, who affords them no nourishment, nor any return; who deserves nothing nor in any way obliges them, as was and is the case with the Author of life and grace, my divine Son? So great is the ingratitude of men, so foolish their infidelity, so unhappy their blindness. Merely because God has given men freedom of will, either to follow their Master or not, to show themselves thankful or not, they side with Lucifer and serve him freely, permit him to enter the house of God and his temple, that he may tyrannically confuse and profane it and draw after him the greater part of the world to his eternal torments.

This conflict will last to the end, because the Prince of eternity, on account of his infinite goodness, will not cease to defend the souls He created and redeemed by his blood. But not only He himself battles with the dragon, nor only through his angels; for it redounds to the greater glory and exaltation of his name, if He overcomes the enemies and confounds their pride through the human creatures, in whom they seek to avenge themselves upon the Lord. I, being a mere creature, next to my Son, the true God, was the Leader and Sovereign in these battles. Although through his Passion and Death, He vanquished the demons, who had become very haughty by the dominion of sin inaugurated among men by Adam; yet, after He, and I in his name, had triumphed over the enemies and through our victories established the Church in such high perfection and holiness, the Church would have persevered and Lucifer would have remained crushed (as I said before), if the

ingratitude and the forgetfulness of men had not impelled him anew toward the perdition and ruin of the whole globe.

Nevertheless my divine Son did not forsake the Church, which He had acquired by his blood, nor have I, as its Mother and Protectress, forsaken it; and We continue to look within it for some souls to defend the glory and honor of God and fight the battles against hell for the confusion and crushing of the demons. Hence I wish thee to dispose thyself by divine grace for this battle and not to wonder at the strength of the demon, nor to be downcast at thy misery and poverty. Thou knowest that the wrath of Lucifer against me was greater than against any of the creatures, and greater than against all of them together; but by the power of the Lord I vanquished him gloriously, and thou, in the same power, canst resist him in thy smaller temptations. Although thou mayest be weak and wanting in what is required, I wish thee to understand, that my divine Son acts now as a king who is short of subjects and soldiers and will admit any one who wishes to serve in his army. Encourage thyself then to conquer satan in present matters, for then the Lord will afterwards arm thee for greater battles. I tell thee, that the Church would not be entangled in its present difficulties, if a number of the souls belonging to it had taken it upon themselves to defend the cause and honor of God; but the Church stands very much alone and forsaken by the children, whom it nourished at its own bosom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TERRIBLE DANGER OF SMALL FAULTS IN
CHOSEN SOULS.

My daughter, none of the mortals have any excuse for not ordering their lives in imitation of the life of my divine Son and of my own; for We were an example and model for all. No one can be without blame, if in his own state he is not perfect, having before his eyes the incarnate God, who became the Teacher of holiness for all states of life. Some souls, however, are by the divine will chosen and set apart from the common order, in order that they may enjoy more of the fruit of his blood, imitate more perfectly his life and mine, and cause his divine goodness, omnipotence and mercy to shine forth more resplendently. Whenever these chosen souls faithfully and fervently correspond with the Lord, only worldly ignorance will wonder, that He should show Himself so liberal in exerting his power to overwhelm them with favors and blessings beyond all human conception. Whoever places such wonders of his beneficence in doubt, will only hinder the glory God seeks in his works. Such unbelievers attempt to measure them by the restricted and curtailed capacity of the human mind, which in them is usually depraved and obscured by their own sins.

And if the chosen souls themselves are so gross as to doubt his benefits, or do not dispose themselves to receive and use them prudently, or with the esteem and appreciation due to the operations of God: then, no doubt,

they offend his Majesty much more than others, to whom no such blessings or talents are vouchsafed. The Lord does not wish the bread of the children to be cast to the dogs (Matth. 15, 26); nor his pearls to those who tread them under foot or despise them (Matth. 7, 7); for these blessings of special grace are the reserves of his highest Providence, and the capital of the price of the Redemption. Reflect then, my dearest, that such faults are committed by those souls, who are diffident in arduous or adverse events, or who shrink from the Lord, or hinder Him, when they are singled out as the instruments of his power for his service. Their sin is still more reprehensible, when they refuse to confess Christ in all such works for fear of the difficulties connected with them and of the gossip of the world concerning such new undertakings; when they act in such a manner, that they serve God and do his will only when it coincides with their own; or if they practice virtue only when it is accompanied by such and such conveniences; or love only when it does not disturb their tranquillity; or if they believe or acknowledge benefits only when sweetened by caresses. As soon as adversity or labor is to be encountered for the sake of God, they at once give way to discontent, sorrow, discouragement and impatience, by which they frustrate the designs of the Lord and make themselves incapable of perfection in virtue.

All this arises from a deficiency of prudence, knowledge and true love, which prevents these souls from looking to their own and their neighbor's advance. For they look to themselves, rather than to God; and are governed more by selflove, than divine love and charity. Tacitly they are guilty of great presumption, since they attempt to direct God's will and even to reprehend it, professing their readiness for great labors in his service un-

der such and such conditions and their inability under other conditions. They are unwilling to risk their credit and their comfort, even for the common good and for the glory of God. They think that, as they do not openly proclaim their refusal, they do not make themselves guilty of this temerity; yet it is the devil, who conceals it from them, in order that they may incur guilt.

In order that thou, my daughter, mayest not fall into this monstrous sin, thou shouldst discreetly ponder what I give thee to understand and record, and how much I desire thee to imitate me. I could not fall into such sins, yet in continual watchfulness I prayed to the Lord to govern me in all my actions according to his will and pleasure only, and I gave myself no liberty of doing anything that was not according to his greater pleasure. Hence I sought for myself the forgetfulness and the retirement from all creatures. Thou art subject to sin, and thou knowest how many snares the dragon, by himself and through the creatures, has laid in order to lead thee into it: hence thou hast good reason for ceaselessly beseeching the Almighty to govern thee in all thy actions, and for closing the portals of thy senses in such a way as to exclude from thy interior every image or figure of mundane and earthly things. Renounce therefore thy free will into the hands of thy God and yield it to every pleasure of the Lord and mine. In what thou must necessarily transact with creatures for the fulfillment of the divine law and of charity, admit no image except what is unavoidable; and immediately ask, that the remembrance of what is not necessary be blotted out of thy mind. Concerning all thy works, words and thoughts consult with God, with thy angels and with me, for we are always with thee; consult also with thy confessor wherever possible. All that thou dost or re-

solvest without this consultation, hold in suspicion and as dangerous, and only by comparing it with my teachings, thou canst ascertain, whether it agrees or disagrees with the will of God.

Above all never lose sight of the essence of God; for the light of faith which thou hast received, is to serve especially for this purpose. Since this is to be thy last end, I wish that even in mortal life thou attain this vision as far as is possible to thee with the divine grace. It is indeed time that thou cast out those vain fears and suggestions, by which the enemy has sought to hinder and detain thee from giving constant credit to the blessings and favors of the Lord. Begin to be prudent and strong in this confident faith and deliver thyself entirely to the pleasure of his Majesty, in order that He may do with thee and in thee what shall be best for his service.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREATNESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

My dearest daughter, at other times I have spoken to thee of a complaint, which I have against the children of the Church, and especially against the women, in whom the fault is greater. In my sight it is abominable, because it is so much opposed to my own conduct in life. I repeat it here, in order that thou mayest imitate me and keep away from what the foolish women and daughters of Belial are guilty of: namely, treating the priests of the Most High without reverence, esteem, or respect. This fault increases day by day in the Church, and therefore I renew this warning already several times recorded. Tell me, my daughter, what must be thought of the fact, that priests, the anointed of the Lord, appointed to represent Christ and to consecrate his body and blood, are serving vile, impure, and earthly women? That they should stand uncovered and do reverence to a proud and miserable woman, only because she is rich and they are poor? I ask, has the poor priest less dignity than the rich? Or do riches confer a greater or equal dignity, power and excellence, than the one given to priests and ministers by my divine Son? The angels have no regard for the rich on account of their possessions, but they respect priests for their exalted dignity. Hence, how could such an abuse and perversity creep into the Church, that the anointed of the Lord should be outraged and despised by the faithful, who know and confess them to be sanctified by Christ himself?

It is true that the priests themselves are very

guilty and reprehensible when they, disregarding their dignity, enslave themselves to the service of other men, and much more, of women. But if priests have some excuse in their poverty, the rich have none in their pride, that they should, on account of the poverty of the priests, oblige them to be servants, when in reality they are masters. This monstrosity is very abominable to the saints and very disagreeable in my eyes on account of the veneration I had for the priests. Great was my dignity as Mother of God; yet I often prostrated myself at their feet and considered it a great happiness to kiss the ground on which they trod. But the blindness of the world has obscured the sacerdotal dignity and confounded the precious with the vile (Jer. 15, 19); it has lowered the priests to the position of the common people by its laws and disorderly customs (Is. 25, 2), making use of the one as well as the other for their degradation; and the same minister who now at the altar offers the tremendous sacrifice of the sacred body and blood, afterwards leaves it to serve and subject himself to the service even of women, who by nature and by the condition are so inferior, and sometimes are made even more unworthy by their sins.

I wish then, my daughter, that thou seek to make up for this fault and abuse among the children of the Church as far as possible. I give thee to understand, that even from my throne in heaven I look with veneration and respect upon the priests who are on earth. Thou must always regard them with the same veneration, as if they were at the altar, or holding the most blessed Sacrament in their hands or at their breast; and even the ornaments and all their vestments thou shouldst hold in great veneration, just as I with reverence provided garments for the Apostles. Then, besides what thou hast

understood and written concerning the divine Scriptures, thou must gage thy esteem for these writings by what they contain and enclose, and by the means which the Almighty took to incite the Evangelists to write them. As well in the Gospels as in the rest of holy writings the Holy Ghost himself lent his assistance, in order that the Church might be rich and prosperous in the abundance of doctrine, of science and light concerning the mysteries and operations of the Lord. To the supreme pontiff of Rome thou must render highest obedience and veneration before all other men; and when thou hearest him mentioned, show reverence by inclining thy head as if thou heardst the name of my divine son or my own named in thy presence; for on earth he takes the place of Christ, and when I lived in the world, I showed my reverence whenever the name of saint Peter was pronounced. In order that thou mayest practice my doctrine and find grace in the eyes of the Most High, whom all these works please very much and who considers none of them small if done for his love, I wish that thou be very attentive and a most faithful follower of my footsteps.

CHAPTER X.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

My daughter through the whole course of my life is evident how gratefully I kept in mind the works of the Redemption, the passion and death of my divine Son, especially after I had actually seen Him sacrificed on the Cross for the salvation of men. But in this chapter particularly have I wished to draw thy attention to the care and the continual exercises, by which I renewed in me not only the remembrance, but the sufferings of the Passion. I desire that the knowledge of this cause men to feel reproach and confusion at their monstrous forgetfulness of the incomprehensible benefit of the Redemption. O what a shameful, what a horrible and dangerous ingratitude of men is this! Forgetfulness is a clear proof of contempt, for one does not forget so easily, what one holds dear. What reason or excuse then can there be, that men forget the eternal blessings they have received? That they should despise the love, with which the eternal Father has delivered over to death his only begotten Son? The charity and patience with which his and my Son accepted it for them (John 3, 16.) The insensible earth responds to the efforts of those that cultivate it; wild beasts become tame and domesticated in return for benefits. Men among themselves are beholden to their benefactors; and when such thankful feelings are not forthcoming, they resent it, condemn it, and call it a great offense.

What is the reason then, that only toward their God and Redeemer they should be ungrateful and forget

what He suffered in order to rescue them from eternal damnation? And in view of this very evil return, they complain of not receiving his assistance as they desire. In order that they may understand what fearful guilt they load upon themselves by their ingratitude, I will remind thee, my daughter, that Lucifer and his demons, seeing so many souls oblivious of the sufferings of Christ, draw the following conclusions and say of such souls: "This soul does not remember or hold in esteem the benefit of God's Redemption and we are certain of gaining it over to our side; for the soul that is so foolish as not to remember such a blessing, will certainly not detect our wiles. Let us proceed to tempt and destroy it, since it is deprived of its strongest defense." Having in their large experience found their reasoning on this point to be almost infallible, they zealously seek to blot out the memory of the passion and death of Christ and to excite a contempt for the preaching or discoursing about it among men; and they have succeeded to a great extent, causing dreadful damage to souls. On the other hand they are wary and fearful of tempting those who have accustomed themselves to the mediation and the remembrance of the sufferings of Christ; for from this source they feel issuing against them a force and influence, which often prevents them from approaching those who thus piously cherish the memory of the Passion.

I desire thee then, my dearest, not to detach from thy bosom and heart this bouquet of myrrh (Cant. 1, 12) and to imitate me closely in the contemplation and the exercises of the Passion. For thus must thou keep alive the memory of the sufferings of my divine Son and satisfy for the injuries and blasphemies inflicted upon his divine Person by his enemies who crucified Him. Seek thou, as long as thou shalt be upon earth, to com-

pensate for the ingratitude and forgetfulness of mortals. And in order to do it as I desire, never let thy remembrance of Christ crucified, afflicted and blasphemed be extinguished. Persevere in thy exercises, never omitting them except in obedience or in a just cause; for if thou imitate me in this I shall make thee a participant in the effects I myself felt.

In order to dispose thyself day by day for holy Communion thou shouldst apply whatever thou performest in these exercises; imitate also the other works and practices, which thou hast come to know of me. If I, the Mother of Him whom I was to receive, deemed myself unworthy of Communion and by so many means sought the purity necessary for such a Sacrament, consider what thou must do, so poor and subject to so many miseries and imperfections! Purify the temple of thy interior, scrutinizing it by the divine light and adorning it with great virtues, since it is the eternal God, whom thou art to receive; One, of whom nobody but Himself is worthy. Invoke the intercession of the angels and saints to obtain grace from the Lord. Above all I exhort thee to call upon me and ask me to help thee; for thou must know, that I am the special Advocate and Protectress of those, who desire to arrive at great purity for receiving holy Communion. Whenever they invoke me for this purpose, I present myself before the throne of the Most High, and, as one well knowing the disposition required for harboring God himself, I ask his favor and grace for those who are about to receive Him in the holy Sacrament. I have not lost in heaven the solicitude and zeal, which I exhibited upon earth. Having asked me, proceed to ask also the intercession of the angels, for they also are very anxious to see souls approach the holy Eucharist with great devotion and purity.

CHAPTER XI.

SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE

My daughter, when mortals, having run the short course of their lives, come to the end at which God expects them to merit eternal life, then will they also by their own experience, see the finish of all their errors and deceits. Then the just will see in what consisted their real salvation and happiness, and the reprobate, wherein lay their lamentable and everlasting perdition. O how happy, my daughter, is the man, who during the short instant of his life seeks to anticipate the divine science, which he is so soon to possess by experience! This is the true wisdom, not to wait for the end until knowing that end, but look to the end in the beginning of the course, and enter upon it, not with so many doubts whether we shall attain the end, but with some security of attaining it. Consider then, with what sentiments those must be animated, who, at the beginning of a race, see a great prize, which they can attain by pressing on their course for a time with great diligence (I Cor. 9, 24). Certainly they will set out with all speed, without turning aside or permitting themselves to be detained by any cause whatsoever. And if they press not on or if they cease to look to the prize at the end of their course, they will be held either as foolish, or as ignorant of what they were losing.

Such is mortal life of men, a short course, the end of which shall bring to the runner either eternal glory or everlasting torment as a reward or punishment. All men are born to run this race by the use of their reason and free will; and no one, much less the children of the

Church, can plead ignorance as an excuse. Hence, where is the judgment and good sense of those in the Catholic faith? Why does vanity still retain its hold upon them? Why do they ensnare themselves in the love of what is only apparent and deceitful? Why do they ignore the end to which they shall come so soon? Why will they not understand what there awaits them? Do they perhaps not know that they are born but to die (Ps. 138, 49), that life is but momentary, death infallibly certain, the reward or punishment unavoidable and eternal? (II Cor. 4, 17). What can the lovers of this world answer to these questions? Those that consume all of their short life (for even the longest lives are very short), in accumulating honors, or riches, in wasting their strength and powers in the enjoyment of corruptible and most vile pleasures?

Alas, my friend, consider how false and treacherous is the world in which thou art born and which thy eyes behold. In it I desire thee to show thyself as my disciple, my follower, a child of my desires, and a fruit of my prayers. Forget it entirely with a heartfelt abhorrence: do not lose sight of the end toward which thou runnest so swiftly, the purpose for which thy Creator formed thee out of nothing; sigh for it continually, and direct toward it thy anxious solicitude; do not permit thyself to be drawn away by the fleeting, vain and deceitful things of the world; let the divine love alone dwell in thee and engage all thy forces; for that is not a true love, which permits any part of them to be diverted to other things, or which does not free them and mortify them entirely from passing things, and subject them to the one great end. Let this love be in thee strong as death (Cant. 8, 6), so that thou mayest be renewed entirely as I desire. Do not hinder the will of my divine

Son in all that He wishes to accomplish in thee, and be assured of his fidelity, which rewards a hundredfold (Matth. 19, 29). Keep in mind with humble veneration what He has until now wrought in thee; and I exhort thee and admonish thee to experience in thee anew his truths, as I have commanded thee. For all this continue thy exercises with new solicitude in finishing this history. And give thanks to the Lord for the great and inestimable benefits of his having ordered and disposed thy superiors to permit thee to receive Him daily in holy Communion. Preparing thyself for it in imitation of me, continue also the petitions I have recommended and enjoined upon thee.

CHAPTER XII.

ABSOLUTE RELIABILITY OF THESE TEACHINGS OF
THE QUEEN.

My daughter, first of all I wish to enlighten thee concerning certain doubts of thy heart regarding the exalted and extraordinary mysteries of this history. Two misgivings have disturbed thy interior : first, whether thou who knowest thyself to be such an insignificant, useless and ignorant woman, are a fit instrument for recording these mysteries ; whether it would not be better to let some other person, more learned and perfect in virtue, write them and thus give them more authority ; since thou are the least of all, the most useless and ignorant. Secondly, whether these mysteries, which are so extraordinary and never heard of, especially the frequent beatific and intuitive visions of the Divinity during my life, shall ever find credit among those who read of them. To thy first doubt I answer, that in truth thou art the least and most useless of all ; since thou hast heard it from the mouth of the Lord and I confirm it. But remember that belief in this history and in all that it contains, does not depend on the instrument, but on its Author, who is the highest truth, and upon the contents of thy writing ; and in this regard not even the highest seraph could add thereto, nor canst thou diminish or omit anything.

That an angel should write this history is not befitting ; and if he should, the unbelievers and the sluggish of heart will nevertheless find occasion to slander him. It is necessary that the instrument be a human

person; but it was not proper that this person be the most learned or wise; for then this work might be ascribed to his knowledge and thus occasion the danger of having the divine light esteemed no higher, or even lower, than human knowledge, or it might be attributed entirely to human forethought and industry. It is more to the glory of God, that this person should be a woman, who can rely neither on her own knowledge, nor her own industry. I likewise take special pleasure and honor from the fact that thou art this instrument; because thou (and all others) wilt know, that there is nothing of thy own in this history and that thou must not attribute more to thyself than to the pen with which thou writest, since thou art but the instrument in the hands of the Lord and the repeater of my words. And, as thou art such, so insignificant and sinful, thou wilt not be disturbed in seeing mortals refuse to believe; since, in disbelieving what thou writest, they will not do any wrong to thee, but by their unbelief fail in proper reverence for my words. Although thy faults and shortcomings are many, they can all be neutralized by the charity and kindness of the Lord, who has not looked for any other instrument of this work, but has raised thee from the dust and manifested in thee his liberal power. He has communicated his doctrine by one in whom the power of his truth would appear more plainly; and hence I desire that thou follow it up in thy conduct and reach the perfection thou desirest.

In answer to the second misgiving and anxiety, whether the greatness of these mysteries will not prevent belief in what thou writest, I have said many things in the course of this history. Those that take care to attain a worthy concept and appreciation of me, will find no difficulty in believing me; for they will under-

stand the relation and proportion of my privileges to the dignity of Mother of God. They will understand that God's works are perfect; and if any one begins to doubt in these matters, it is certain that he does not know what God is, or what I am. If God has shown Himself so powerful and liberal in the other saints, that many in the Church are held to have seen the Divinity in mortal life, and certainly have seen it, how, or on what grounds can that be denied to me, what is conceded to so many others inferior to me? All that my divine Son merited and did for them, was ordained for his glory, and secondarily in my honor; the end must be held in higher esteem and valuation than the means: hence greater was the divine love, which inclined God to favor me than all the rest, whom He has benefited for my sake. There is no reason for surprise in stating that what He has done sometimes for them, He has done many times for her, whom He has chosen as his Mother.

Let the pious and the prudent keep in mind what has been taught in the Church, that the measure of the favors I received from the hands of my divine Son, is his Omnipotence and my capacity; for He has conceded to me all the favors which he could confer, and which I was capable of receiving. These graces were in me not barren, but always fruitful to the fullest extent in which it was possible in a creature. The divine Master himself was my Son, powerful to operate as far as the creature placed no obstacle; since I placed no such obstacle, how can any one dare to limit his works of love toward me his Mother, whom He himself had made worthy of his benefits and favors above all the rest of his saints, not one of whom deprived himself, like I have, of his fruition, even an hour, for the sake of helping his Church? And if what He did for me seem much, I desire thee and

all the rest to understand, that all his favors were grounded upon and included in the one privilege of my being conceived without sin; for it was a greater favor to make me worthy of his glory, when I could not merit it, than to show me his glory when I had merited it and had placed no hindrance.

By these considerations thy doubts will be solved; and as for the rest, let that be my concern, and let it be thine, to follow and imitate me; for as far as thou art concerned, this is the purpose of all thou understandest and writest. This should be thy solicitude, that thou omit the practice of no virtue made known to thee. I wish that thou also attend to what the other saints have done in following my divine Son and me; for thou dost not owe less than they to his mercy, and with none have I been more kind and liberal. In my school I wish thee to learn the love, the gratitude and humility of a true disciple of mine; for I desire thee to distinguish thyself and advance thyself exceedingly. All my festivals thou shouldst celebrate with a sincere devotion and invite the saints and angels to assist thee therein; especially the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in which I was so highly favored by the divine power and from which I derived so much joy. In these times, more than formerly, I am solicitous of seeing it acknowledged by men and of their praising the Most High for this extraordinary miracle. On the day of thy own birth into the world thou shouldst render special thanks to the Lord in imitation of me and perform some extra work in his service. Above all thou shouldst resolve thenceforth to amend thy life and to commence to labor in this anew. And all the mortals, instead of spending the anniversary of their birth in demonstration of vain earthly joy, should make similar resolutions.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE.

My daughter, the sin of ingratitude is one of the most heinous committed by men against God and by it they make themselves most unworthy and abominable in the sight of God and the saints. For both God and the saints have a kind of horror of this vile conduct in men. Yet in spite of its pernicious effects, there is none which men, each one in particular, commit more frequently and thoughtlessly. It is true that in order to lessen the debt accumulating by their most ungrateful and universal forgetfulness of his benefits, God requires from his Church a certain recompense for this want of thankfulness in her children and in mankind. For in recognition of his blessings, the Church as such offers up so many prayers and sacrifices of praise and glory as we see ordained in her. But as the favors and graces of his liberal and watchful Providence are not only for the common good of the faithful, but to the advantage of each mortal in particular, the debt of gratitude is not paid by this general thanksgiving of the Church; each one for himself owes thanks for what he receives from the divine liberality.

How many are there among the mortals, who during the whole course of their lives have not excited one sincere act of thanksgiving for the gift of life, for its preservation, for health, food, honors, possessions and all the other temporal and natural goods! Others there are, who, if at any time they give thanks for these

benefits, do it not because they truly love God, the Giver, but because they love themselves and delight in these temporal and earthly blessings and in the possession of them. This kind of vain deceit discovers itself in two ways: first, in seeking these earthly and transitory goods, men are full of dissatisfaction, haste and discomfort, and they scarcely can think of, ask for, or desire other more spiritual things, loving only what is apparent and passing. Although many times their being deprived of health, honor, possessions and other things is a blessing of God, which prevents in them a blind and disorderly attachment to such matters; yet they think it a misfortune and, as it were, an injury, and they allow their heart continually to verge on destruction by trespassing upon what is finite and perishable.

Secondly, this deceit is known by the forgetfulness of spiritual benefits in the blind pursuit of what is transitory, so that men neither recognize or acknowledge what is beyond. This fault among the children of the Church is most vile and dreadful, since, without any obligation on the part of God and without any of their merit, the divine mercy seeks to draw them to the secure path of eternal life, signally applying to them the merits of the passion and death of my divine Son. Every one who is now in a state of holiness in the Church, could have been born in other times and ages, before God came into the world; moreover he could have been born among pagans, idolaters, heretics or other infidels, where his eternal damnation would be unavoidable. Without their merit God called such persons to his holy faith, giving them knowledge of the certain truth; justifying them in Baptism, putting at their disposal the Sacraments, the ministers, the teachings and enlightenments of eternal life. He placed them upon the sure path, granted them

his assistance, pardoned them their sins, raised them from their falls, waited for their repentance, invited them by his mercy, and rewarded them with a liberal hand. He defended them through his holy angels, gave them Himself as a pledge and as a nourishment of eternal life; and thus He accumulated so many blessings upon them, that they are without measure or number, and that not a day nor an hour passes without increasing their indebtedness.

Tell me then, daughter, what thanks are due to his so liberal and fatherly kindness? And how many men deserve to experience it? The greatest blessing of all is that in punishment for this ingratitude the portals of his mercy have not been closed, and the fountains of his goodness have not dried up; for it is infinite. The root of this most dreadful ingratitude in men is the boundless desire and covetousness for the temporal, apparent and transitory goods. From this insatiable thirst grows their unthankfulness; for as they hanker so much after the temporal goods, they undervalue what they receive and give thanks neither for them nor for the spiritual goods; and thus they are most ungrateful as well for the ones as the others. In addition to this unbearable foolishness they are guilty of a still greater one, namely, they ask God not for what is necessary to them, but for things which are injurious and will bring about their eternal perdition. Among men it is considered mean to ask a favor from the one they have offended; and still more outrageous to ask a favor for the purpose of committing a still greater offense. What must we then say of a vile earthly being, an enemy of God, when he petitions his Creator for life, health, honor, possessions and other things, for which he will never give thanks, and which he does not intend to use for any other purpose than to offend the divine Giver?

If, in addition to this, such men never thank God for having created them, redeemed them, called them, borne them with patience and justified them, prepared for them the same glory which He enjoys: and if, while expecting this glory, they do not even ask for the grace of acknowledging and repenting of their sins, they certainly show nothing but the utmost temerity and presumption. I assure thee, my dearest, that this so frequent ingratitude toward God is one of the most certain signs of reprobation in those who are guilty of such forgetfulness and carelessness. It is also a bad sign, when the just Judge confers temporal blessings upon those who ask for them in forgetfulness of the blessings of the Redemption and Justification; for all such, oblivious of the means of their eternal salvation, demand but the instruments of their death, and to yield to their demands is no blessing, but a chastisement of their blindness.

All these evils I manifest to thee in order that thou mayest fear them and avoid their causes. But remember that thy gratitude must not be of the ordinary or common kind; for the blessings thou hast received go far beyond thy knowledge and power of appreciation. Do not allow thyself to be deceived into shrinking from proper acknowledgment of graces on the plea of humility. Thou knowest the efforts of the demon to make thee forget the works and the favors of the Lord by drawing thy attention toward thy faults and miseries and making thee believe that the blessings of truth, which thou hast received, are incompatible with these thy shortcomings. Begin in earnest to cast off this deception and know, that the more thou ascribest the goods thou receivest from his bounty to Him alone, the more dost thou annihilate and humiliate thyself; and that the more thou owest to Him, the less able thou art to pay thy debts,

since thou canst not pay even for the least of his favors. To be convinced of this truth is not presumption, but prudence; and not to acknowledge this indebtedness is not humility, but most reprehensible foolishness; for thou canst not be thankful for what thou dost not know; nor will thy love be stirred to action readily without being incited by the blessings and favors of God. Thou art full of fear of losing the grace and friendship of the Lord; and with good reason dost thou fear, if thou dost not make them fruitful; for He has done as much for thee, as would suffice to justify many souls. But to have a prudent fear of losing his grace is quite a different thing from doubting it for the purpose of escaping acknowledgment for it; and this is the kind of doubt into which the enemy labors to cast thee, seeking to substitute a stubborn incredulity for holy fear of God, by clothing it in the mantle of a good intention and humility. Thy fear must exert itself in watching over thy treasure and in striving to imitate me with the purity of an angel and practicing all the teachings which I give thee in this history for this very purpose.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VASTNESS OF MARY'S GIFTS.

My daughter and disciple, I desire that thy admiration in writing of the mysteries of my life and holiness induce thee to praise the Omnipotent for his liberality toward Me; and thy confidence in my powerful intercession and protection should raise thee above thyself. But if thou art astonished that my divine Son should thus add grace upon grace and gifts upon gifts, and that He should visit me so frequently and raise me to his presence in heaven, remember what thou hast already recorded concerning my depriving myself of the beatific vision for the sake of governing the Church. And even if this charity had not merited this recompense during my mortal life, He was ready, on account of my being his Mother and He my Son, to work such wonders with me as are beyond created thought and were due to no other creature. The dignity of Mother of God so far exceeds the sphere of all the other creatures, that it would be base ignorance on the part of men to deny me favors greater than those bestowed upon other saints. Taking human flesh of my substance carried with it such an obligation in the eternal Word, that (according to thy mode of understanding) God himself could not meet it, without a return adequate to his Omnipotence and corresponding fully to my capacity of receiving. This power of God is infinite and inexhaustible, and will always remain so; but that which God communicates, is finite and limited. I, too, am a mere created being, and

in comparison with the being of God, all created beings are nothing.

In addition to this, on my part, I placed no obstacle, but deserved the unlimited and unrestrained liberality of the Omnipotent in all his gifts, graces and favors as far as they could be communicated to a creature. As these, notwithstanding their wonderful greatness, were always finite and the power and essence of God is always infinite and without limit, it can easily be understood how I could accumulate grace upon grace and blessings upon blessings. And not only was I capable of thus receiving, but it was equitable that I should thus receive, in order that I might correspond with entire perfection to his marvelous work of making me the Mother of God; for none of his works remain imperfect or defective. Since this dignity of being made the Mother of God contains all graces as in their origin and fount, therefore, as soon as men know me to be Mother of God, they implicitly also know, as in their cause, the perfections due to such excellence in dignity. It was left to the devotion, piety and good will of the faithful to earn the regard of my divine Son and my protection, by searching properly into my holiness and gifts and by recording and confessing them in evidence of their devotion and my dignity. For this purpose, special knowledge and enlightenment has been given to many saints, to authors and writers, besides special revelations to others concerning some favors and privileges conceded to me by the Almighty.

As nevertheless many of the mortals, even the zealous ones, have been timid in this matter, and others, in their want of piety, unduly sluggish, my divine Son has, in his fatherly condescension and at the time most opportune for his holy Church, manifested to them these

hidden mysteries, without depending upon human insight and knowledge, but upon the enlightenment of his own truth, in order that they might gather new joy and hope from the knowledge of my privileges, and give to the Almighty new glory and praise for the blessings coming from me and from the works of the Redemption.

I wish, my daughter, that thou consider thyself more under this obligation than all the rest of men, since I have chosen thee for my special disciple and daughter, in order that, by the writing of my life, thy heart may be raised to a more ardent and anxious desire to imitate and follow me. The lesson of this chapter for thee should be, that thou follow me in the ineffable thanksgiving for the blessed Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word in my womb. Write in thy heart this marvel of the Omnipotent, in order never to forget it, and signalize especially the days corresponding to the mysteries which thou hast there described. In them and in my name I desire that thou celebrate this festivity with great fervor and joy of thy soul, thanking God in the name of all mortals for his having become incarnate in me for their salvation; and also praising Him for having raised me to the dignity of being his Mother. And remember that nothing ever caused so much astonishment in the saints and angels, who have a knowledge of the infinite essence of God, than to see Him united to the human nature; and, although they continue to understand more and more of this mystery, there will always remain more to find out through all the ages.

In order that thou mayest properly renew and celebrate these benefits of the Incarnation and Nativity of my divine Son, thou must try to acquire humility and purity as of an angel; for by these virtues thy thanksgiving will be pleasing to the Lord and by them thou

wilt in a measure give some return for his having made Himself of thy nature. Ponder deeply how heavy are the sins of men who, while having Christ as their Brother, fall from such excellence and neglect their obligations. Consider thyself as a portrait or image of the Godman, and that any kind of sin is equivalent to thy despising it and blotting it out of thy soul. This new dignity to which human nature was raised is much forgotten by the children of Adam and they refuse to forsake their old habits and miseries in order to put on Christ (Rom. 13, 14). But thou, my daughter, forget the house of thy father and thy people (Ps. 44, 11), and seek to renew thyself with the beauty of thy Savior, in order that thou mayest be pleasing in the eyes of the supreme King.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FEASTS OF THE CHURCH.

My daughter, the divine Spirit, whose wisdom and prudence governs the holy Church, through my intercession has ordained, that in it so many different feasts should be celebrated, not only in order that proper thanks should be given to the Creator and Redeemer for the works of the Redemption, of my life, and of the saints, and that the blessings, which never can be properly repaid, may not be forgotten by mankind; but also in order that these solemnities might afford men an opportunity of attending to holy exercises and of recollecting themselves interiorly by withdrawing from the solitudes of temporal affairs; and in order that they might, by the exercise of virtue and the good use of the Sacraments, repair the losses sustained by their distractions, imitate the virtues and the lives of the saints, solicit my intercession, merit the forgiveness of their sins and gain the graces and favors held in readiness by the divine mercy in these mysteries.

This is the spirit of the holy Church, by which She desires to govern and nourish her children as a devoted mother. And I, who am Mother of them all, sought to attract and bind them to the secure path of their salvation. But the insinuations of the infernal serpent have always (and especially in the unhappy times in which thou livest) tended to pervert these holy ends of the Lord and mine, and when he cannot pervert the order of the holy Church, he exerts himself to pre-

vent the greater part of the faithful from being benefited by her institutions and strives to induce many to convert them into greater guilt for their condemnation. And the same demon will stand as their accuser at the tribunal of the divine justice; for on the days of greatest solemnity and festivity men not only fail to enter into the spirit of the Church by employing them in works of virtue and in worship of their God; but just on those days they commit the most grievous sins, as is ordinarily the case with carnal and worldly men. Certainly most outrageous and reprehensible is the common forgetfulness and contempt of this duty in the children of the Church, when they profane the sacred and holy days by spending them in diversion and play, in excessive and disorderly eating and drinking, irritating the justice of the Almighty instead of appeasing Him, in succumbing to their invisible enemies instead of vanquishing them, and in permitting them to triumph in their pride and malice.

Do thou, my daughter, bewail this damage, since I cannot bewail it now in the same way as I have done it in mortal life; and exert thyself to assist thy brethren in overcoming this widespread carelessness. And although the life of the religious should differ from that of seculars so as to have no distinction of days and to apply every day for the divine worship, for prayer and holy exercises, as thou shouldst teach thy subjects; yet I desire thee to celebrate with them the feasts of the Lord and mine by a more careful preparation and purity of conscience. I wish thee to fill all thy days and thy nights with works holy and pleasing in the sight of the Lord; but on the festivals thou shouldst add other interior and exterior exercises. Excite the fervor of thy heart, recollect thyself, and if it seems to thee that thou art doing much, labor still more earnestly to make certain

thy vocation and election (II Pet. 1, 10), nor ever omit any exercise out of negligence. Consider that the days are evil (Ephes. 5, 6), and that life disappears like a dream (Ps. 93, 4). Live very carefully in order that thou mayest not be found without merit, holy deeds and perfect works. To each hour assign its legitimate occupation, as thou hast seen me do it, and as I have many times admonished and taught thee.

For this purpose I exhort thee to live attentive to the divine inspirations and amid all the other blessings not to forget those contained in such enlightenments. Let thy care be such, that no virtuous act or greater perfection, which is possible to thee and comes to thy notice, remain unexecuted. I assure thee, my dearest, that through their negligence and forgetfulness mortals lose immense treasures of grace and glory. All the perfection that I knew of my divine Son when I lived with Him, I imitated, and whatever the Holy Ghost pointed out to me as being most perfect, I executed as thou hast seen. This anxious solicitude was as natural to me as to breathe; and through it I induced my divine Son to show me so many favors and visit me so often during my mortal life.

I desire likewise that, in order that thou and thy religious may imitate me in my retirement and solicitude, thou establish the manner in which the customary retreat is to be conducted; and that those who make it should live retired during the days appointed for it in holy obedience. Thou knowest from experience, what fruit is gathered in these retreats, since in it thou hast written nearly the whole of my life; and in this solitude the Lord visited thee with greater blessings and favors for the betterment of thy own life and the conquering of thy enemies. In order that thy religious may understand how

they must conduct themselves in the exercises of the retreat for their greater profit and advancement, I wish that thou write for them a special treatise, in which thou wilt assign all their occupations to certain hours and times. These should be arranged in such a way, that the one who is in retreat does not miss the community exercises; for conformity to them is an obligation superseding all the particular ones. As for the rest, those in retreat should observe perfect silence and go about veiled, in order that they may be known as making the retreat and not spoken to by any of the others. Let none be deprived of this benefit on account of their office and let their duties be assigned to others in obedience. Ask enlightenment of the Lord for writing this treatise, and I shall assist thee to understand more thoroughly my practices in retirement, in order that thou mayest teach it to the others.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUED ZEAL IN PIOUS DEVOTIONS.

My daughter, in the measure as thou advancest in the history of my works and life, I desire that thou also advance in the perfect following and imitation of me. This desire increases in me in proportion to the growth of thy enlightenment and admiration of what thou seest and writest. It is now time that thou make up for what thou hast so far missed and that thou wing the flight of thy spirit to the heights, to which the Almighty calls thee and to which I invite thee. Fill thy works with all perfection and sanctity; remember that the opposition of thy enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh is most hateful and cruel; and that thou canst not overcome so many difficulties and temptations, if thou do not enkindle thy heart with the most ardent fervor and the emulation invincibly to repel and crush the poisonous serpent, which, with diabolical astuteness, avails itself of many deceits, either to cause thy fall or to detain thee in thy course, prevent thee from gaining thy end, and make thee unfit for the state chosen for thee by the Lord.

Thou must not ignore, my daughter, that the demon keeps a constant minute watch over the least carelessness, forgetfulness or inadvertence of souls, and that he is constantly prowling around and lying in ambush to avail himself of every negligence for tempting the incautious to sin and misleading them by means of their passions before they have a chance to know the full extent of the wound he tries to inflict. When afterwards they

come to know it and desire to rise from their fall, they feel still greater difficulty and need much more abundant graces and efforts to resist the evil than before they fell. In guilt the soul weakens in virtue, the enemy acquires more influence, and the passions tend to become indomitable and invincible; hence many fall, but not so many rise from their sins. The remedy against these dangers is to live in continual and unremitting anxiousness to merit the divine grace, in ceaseless striving to do the more perfect, not giving the enemy any chance to find the soul off its guard or unoccupied with some exercise or work of virtue. Thereby the weight of the lower human nature will be lightened, the passions and bad inclinations will be crushed, the demon intimidated, the soul will be raised up and will gain strength against the flesh and dominion over the inferior and sensitive faculties, subjecting them to the divine will.

In all this thou wilt have a living example in my works, of which thou now writest and which thou hast seen manifested in such great light in order that thou mayest not forget them. Attend then, my dearest, to all that thou seest in this clear mirror; and if thou knowest and confessest me as thy Teacher and thy Mother and as the Mistress of all holiness and true perfection, do not delay in imitating me and following me. It is not possible that either thou or any other creature arrive at the perfection and excellence of my works, nor does the Lord bind any one to that; but with his divine grace thou canst fill thy life with works of virtue and holiness, and spend in them all thy time and all thy faculties; so that, adding exercise to exercise, prayer to prayer, petition to petition, virtue to virtue, thou let no time, no day, no hour of thy life be bare of good works learned of me. For this purpose I joined other works with those necessary for the

government of the Church, and celebrated the festivals in the manner and with the preparations thou hast come to know and describe. As soon as one was solemnized, I began to prepare me for another, so that not for one moment was my life void of works holy and pleasing in the sight of the Lord. All the children of the Church, if they wish, can imitate me and thou shouldst do it more zealously than the others. This is the purpose for which the Holy Ghost ordained the solemnities and commemorations of my divine Son and of myself and of the saints recurring in the holy Church.

As I have exhorted thee many times, I wish that thou distinguish thyself by their devout celebration, especially by the celebration of the mysteries of the Divinity and humanity of my divine Son, those of my life and of my glory. Then I desire in thee a special devotion to the angels, as well on account of their great excellence, holiness, beauty and ministry, as also on account of the great favors and blessings thou hast received through these celestial spirits. I desire that thou assimilate thyself to them in purity of thy soul, in the exaltedness of thy thought, in the fervor of thy love, and in living as if thou hadst neither an earthly body nor its passions. They are to be thy friends and companions in thy pilgrimage, in order that they may be such also in the Fatherland. With them thou shouldst now maintain conversation and familiar intercourse, in which they will show thee the attributes and the tokens of thy Spouse, give thee certain knowledge of his perfections, lead thee to the straight ways of justice and of peace, defend thee from the demon, warn thee of his deceits. In the continued teaching of these spirits and ministers of the Most High thou shalt hear the laws of divine love. Hear and obey them exactly.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE THOUGHT OF DEATH.

My daughter, in order to understand the jubilee caused in me by the announcement of the end of my mortal life men must consider the desire and force of the love that urged me on to reach and see God in the glory He had prepared for me from all eternity. This mystery entirely exceeds human capacity; and what the children of the Church are able to understand of it for their consolation, they do not seek to merit or make themselves capable of; for they do not apply the interior light, or purify their consciences for its proper reception. On thee my divine Son and I have liberally conferred this and other mercies; and I assure thee, my dearest, that happy are the eyes which see what thou hast seen, and the ears which hear what thou hast heard. Guard thy treasure, and do not lose it. Labor with all thy power to gain the fruit of this knowledge and of my teaching. I desire of thee that part of this fruit shall be to dispose thyself from this hour for thy death in imitation of me; since, having the certainty of its coming, any space of time should seem short to thee for completing this business of eternal loss or gain. No rational creature was so certain of eternal reward as I; yet, notwithstanding this certainty, I received notice of my death three years in advance, and thou hast seen, how nevertheless I disposed myself and prepared myself for the hour of death with the holy fear proper to a mortal and earth-born creature. In this I acted as a creature subject to death and as the

Teacher of the Church, giving an example to the rest of the faithful of what they are to do as mortals and as more in want of such preparation for avoiding eternal damnation.

Among the absurd fallacies introduced by the demon into the world none is greater or more pernicious than the forgetfulness of the hour of death and of what is to happen at the court of the rigorous Judge. Consider, my daughter, that through this portal sin entered into the world; for the serpent sought to convince the first woman principally, that she would not die and need not think of that matter (Gen. 11, 4). Thus continually deceived, there are uncountable fools who live without thought of death and who die forgetful of the unhappy lot that awaits them. In order that thou mayest not be seized by this human perversity, begin to convince thyself now that thou must die irrevocably; that thou hast received much and paid little; that the account shall be so much the more rigorous, as the Judge has been more liberal in the gifts and talents lavished upon thee in thy sphere. I do not ask of thee more, and also not less, than what thou owest to thy Spouse and to thy Lord, which is always to operate the best in all places, times and occasions, without permitting any forgetfulness, intermission or carelessness.

If in thy weakness thou incurrest the guilt of some omission or negligence, let not the sun go down or the day pass without having sorrowed for it, or confessed it, if thou canst, as if it were for the last account. Proposing amendment, even of the slightest fault, commence to work with new fervor and solicitude, like one from whom the time is slipping away for accomplishing such an arduous and laborious task as the gaining of the eternal glory and felicity and the avoiding of everlasting

death and punishment. This is to be the continual occupation of all thy spiritual and sensitive faculties, in order that thou make thy hope certain and joyful (II Cor. 1, 7); in order that thou mayest not labor in vain (Phil. 2, 161), nor run on into the uncertain (I Cor. 9, 26), like those who content themselves with some good works which they mix up with many reprehensible and detestable crimes. These cannot walk in security and joy of interior hope; since their own conscience assails them and saddens them, unless they are lost in forgetfulness and in the foolish delights of the flesh. In order to fill all thy works with perfection continue the exercises I have shown thee, and also those thou art accustomed to in preparation for death, and all the prayers, prostrations and aspirations thou usually practicest. Then receive the spiritual Viaticum as if for departure from the earth to the other life, taking leave and forgetting all that thou hast in this life. Enkindle thy heart with the desire of seeing thy God, and rise up to his presence, where is to be thy future habitation and thy present conversation (Phil. 3, 20).

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOVE OF THE HOLY CHURCH.

My daughter, since thou admirest my esteem and love for the holy Church, I wish to assist thy affection in conceiving new appreciation and love for it. Thou canst not in thy mortal flesh understand what passed in my soul in contemplating the holy Church. In addition to what thou hast understood already, thou wilt see more, if thou consider what moved my heart; namely, the loving works of my divine Son in the interest of the holy Church; they should be thy meditation day and night; for in what He did for the Church, thou wilt be able to estimate his love toward it. In order to be its Head and the Chief of the predestined in this world and forever (Col. 1, 18; Rom. 8, 29), He descended from the bosom of the eternal Father and assumed flesh in my womb. In order to regain his children (Luke 19, 10), lost through the first sin of Adam, He took passible and mortal flesh. In order to leave the example of his unblemished life and his true and salutary doctrine (I Pet. 2, 21), He lived and conversed with men thirty-three years (Baruch 3, 38). In order to redeem them effectually and merit for them infinite blessings of grace and glory, which they themselves could not merit, He suffered most cruelly, shed his blood accepting a most painful and frightful death on the Cross (Phil. 2, 8). In order that from his sacred body after its death might spring mysteriously his Church, He permitted it to be torn by the lance (John 19, 34).

Since the eternal Father was so well pleased with his Life, Passion and Death, the Redeemer instituted in his Church the sacrifice of his body and blood (Luke 22, 19), in which his memory should live and which the faithful might offer as a satisfaction and peace-offering to the divine Justice. At the same time through it He wished to remain perpetually present in his Church as a Sacrament for the spiritual nourishment of its children and as a fountain of grace, a viaticum and certain pledge of eternal life. In addition to this He sent upon his holy Church the Holy Ghost, to fill it with his gifts and his wisdom, promising that He should guide and govern it always without error free from uncertainty and danger (John 15, 26). He enriched it with all the merits of his Life, Passion and Death, applying them by means of the Sacraments, furnishing all that was necessary for men from their birth to their death for cleansing them from their sins, for persevering in grace, for defending themselves against the demons and vanquishing them by the arms of his Church, for crushing their own natural passions; and at the same time He instituted fit and apt ministers for securing to his faithful all these blessings. In the Church militant He communicates familiarly with all the holy souls; He makes them participants in his hidden and secret favors; He works wonders and miracles for them, and when it is for his glory, assumes their works; He hears their prayers for themselves or for others, thus maintaining the communion of saints.

He left in it also other fountains of light and truth, the holy Gospels and writings dictated by the Holy Ghost, the decisions of the sacred councils, the assured and ancient traditions. He sends at opportune times holy doctors full of wisdom; He furnishes teachers and learned men, preachers and ministers in abundance. He

spreads the renown of the Church through his wonderful saints; beautifies it with a variety of religious orders, wherein the perfect and apostolic life is professed and preserved; He governs it by many prelates and dignitaries. In order that all may proceed in harmony, He placed over it a supreme head, the Roman Pontiff, his vicar, with the plenitude of highest and divine authority, as the head of this mystical and most beautiful body. He defends and protects him to the end of the world against all the powers of the earth and the infernal abysses (Matth. 16, 18). Among all these blessings bestowed and still to be bestowed upon his beloved Church, not the least one was, that he left me in it after his wonderful Ascension in order that it might be spread and governed by my merits and my presence. From that time on and forever I hold this Church as my possession; for the Most High has consigned it to me as a gift and has commanded me to take care of it as its Mother and Mistress.

These, my dearest, are the greatest reasons and motives for my past and present love of the holy Church, here made known to thee; and I desire that they rouse and enkindle thy heart to an ardent performance of all that pertains to thee as my disciple, as my daughter and that of the holy Church. Love it, respect and esteem it from thy whole heart, enjoy its treasures, gather in the riches of heaven, deposited together with its Author, in his Church. Seek to unite it with thee and to unite thyself with it; for in it thou findest thy refuge and thy salvation, consolement in thy labors, hope in thy banishment, light and truth to guide thee in the darkness of this world. For this holy Church I desire thee to labor during all the rest of thy life; since this is the purpose for which thou hast been called into existence; thus shalt

thou imitate and follow me in my tireless solicitude for the Church on earth; this is thy greatest good fortune, for which thou owest eternal gratitude. I wish thee, my daughter, to be mindful of the fact, that with this desire and intent I have applied to thee a great portion of the treasures of the Church for the writing of my life; and the Lord has chosen thee as an instrument and as secretary of its mysteries and hidden sacraments for purposes of his greater glory. Do not conceive, that by having labored somewhat in this work, that thou hast made even a partial return, absolving thee of thy obligations; but rather feel thyself more deeply pledged and obliged to put in practice the doctrine thou hast recorded; and as long as thou refusest to do so, thou wilt remain poor, unrelieved of thy indebtedness, and subject to a rigorous account for all thou hast received. Now is the time to work, so that thou mayest find thyself prepared, at leisure, and disengaged to receive the Spouse at the hour of death. Look upon my freedom and detachment from all earthly things: govern thyself by it, and let not the oil of light and of love fail thee (Matth. 25, 3), in order that thou mayest enter the nuptials of the Spouse through the open gates of his infinite mercy and clemency.

CHAPTER XIX.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

My daughter, besides what thou hast understood and written of my glorious Transition, I wish to inform thee of another privilege, which was conceded to me by my divine Son in that hour. Thou hast already recorded, that the Lord offered me the choice of entering into beatific vision either with or without passing through the portals of death. If I had preferred not to die, the Most High would have conceded this favor, because sin had no part in me, and hence also not its punishment, which is death. Thus it would also have been with my divine Son, and with a greater right, if He had not taken upon Himself the satisfaction of the divine justice for men through his Passion and Death. Hence I chose death freely in order to imitate and follow Him, as also I did during his grievous passion. Since I had seen my Son and true God die, I would not have satisfied the love I owe Him, if I had refused death, and I would have left a great gap in my conformity to and my imitation of my Lord the Godman, whereas He wished me to bear a great likeness to Him in his most sacred humanity. As I would thereafter never be able to make up for such a defect, my soul would not enjoy the plenitude of the delight of having died as did my Lord and God.

Hence my choosing to die was so pleasing to Him and my prudent love therein obliged Him to such an extent, that, in return He immediately conceded to me

a singular favor for the benefit of the children of the Church and conformable to my wishes. It was this, that all those devoted to me, who should call upon me at the hour of death, constituting me as their Advocate in memory of my happy Transition and of my desiring to imitate Him in death, shall be under my special protection in that hour, shall have me as a defense against the demons, as a help and protection, and shall be presented by me before the tribunal of his mercy and there experience my intercession. In consequence the Lord gave me a new power and commission and He promised to confer great helps of his grace for a good death and for a purer life on all those who in veneration of this mystery of my precious death, should invoke my aid. Hence I desire thee, my beloved daughter, from this day on to keep in thy inmost heart a devout and loving memory of this mystery, and to bless, praise, and magnify the Omnipotent, because he wrought such sacred miracles for me and for the mortals. By this solicitude thou wilt oblige the Lord and me to come to thy aid in that last hour.

And since death follows upon life and ordinarily corresponds with it, therefore the surest pledge of a good death is a good life; a life in which the heart is freed and detached from earthly love. For this it is, which in that last hour afflicts and oppresses the soul and which is like a heavy chain restraining its liberty and preventing it from rising above the things loved in this world. O my daughter! How greatly do mortals misunderstand this truth, and how far they err from it in their actions! The Lord gives them life in order that they may free themselves from the effects of original sin, so as to be unhampered by them at the hour of their death; and the ignorant and miserable children of Adam spend all their life in loading upon themselves new burdens and

fetters, so that they die captives of their passions and in the tyranny of their hellish foes. I had no share in original sin and none of its effects had any power over my faculties; nevertheless I lived in the greatest constraint, in poverty and detached from earthly things, most perfect and holy; and this holy freedom I did indeed experience at the hour of my death. Consider then, my daughter, and be mindful of this living example; free thy heart more and more each day, so that with advancing years thou mayest find thyself more free, more detached and averted from visible things, and so that when the Spouse shall call thee to his nuptials, thou wilt not need to seek in vain the required freedom and prudence.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FINAL ACCOUNT.

My daughter, in commemorating my natural death and my burial, I wish that thou also die and be buried to all worldly things, and this is to be the fruit and the principal result of thy having known and written my life. Many times in the course of thy writing have I manifested to thee this as my desire and intimated it to thee as my will, lest thou waste this singular favor shown to thee by the Lord and by me. It is a foul offense in any Christian, if, after dying to sin and after being reborn in Christ by Baptism, knowing that the Lord died for him, he returns again to the same faults; and this will be a still greater wickedness in those souls, who are called by special grace to be the most dear friends of the Lord, as is the case with those, who for that very purpose dedicate and consecrate themselves to his closer service in religion, each one according to his condition and state.

In these souls the vices of the world cause horror in heaven itself, because the pride, the presumption, the haughtiness, the want of mortification, the anger, the covetousness, the conscious impurities and other wickedness in such souls force the Lord and the saints to withdraw from the sight of their monstrous distortion and rouse them to greater wrath and offense than the same sins in other souls. Therefore the Lord repudiates many who unrighteously bear the name of being his spouses and leaves them to their own bad counsels, because they

have so disloyally broken the fidelity promised to God and to me in their vocation and profession. But if all souls must fear this terrible infidelity, consider well, my daughter, what abhorrence especially thou wouldst deserve in the sight of God, if thou wert guilty of such disloyalty. It is time that thou die to the visible things, and that thy body be buried in thy self-knowledge and self-abasement, while thy soul sink into the being of God. The days of thy life in this world are coming to a close; and I shall be the judge to execute the sentence of thy separation from life and from the world: thou needst not any more be seen with those who live in it, nor they with thee. The writing of my life should be for thee the seal of thy death to the world, as I have so often exhorted thee and as thou hast repeatedly and expressly promised me, with heartfelt tears.

I wish this to be the proof of my doctrine and of its efficacy; do not permit it to be discredited in thee to my dishonor, but let heaven and earth perceive the force of its truth and of my example in thy works. For this thou must depend neither upon thy understanding nor upon thy will, and still less upon thy inclinations and passions, because all this for thee has come to a finish. Thy law must be the will of the Lord and my own, and the dictates of obedience. And in order that thou mayest never mistake what is in them the most holy, the most perfect and God-pleasing, the Lord has provided for thy direction in all things, lavishing upon thee his own care, mine, and that of the holy angels. Do not allege ignorance, pusillanimity, or weakness, nor much less, fear. Weigh thy obligation, estimate thy indebtedness, attend to the continual light; operate with the grace thou receivest, so that amid all these benefits there be no cross so heavy, no death so bitter, as shall not be deemed by thee

very light and acceptable. In this consists all thy good, and in it is to be thy delight; since, if thou dost not succeed in dying to all things, besides that thy path will be sown with thorns, thou shalt not reach the perfection thou desirest, nor the state to which the Lord calls thee.

If the world will not forget thee, do thou forget it; if it will not leave thee alone, remember that thou hast forsaken it, and that I have separated thee from it. If it follow thee, fly; if it flatter thee, despise it; if it contemn thee, suffer it; and if it seek thee, let it not find thee except in so far as will be to the glory of the Most High. But as regards all the rest, thou must not any more bear it in mind, than the living remember the dead. Forget it just as the dead forget the living, and I desire that thou have no more intercourse with this world, than the dead have with the living. It will not seem extraordinary to thee, that in the beginning, in the middle and at the end of this history I repeat so often this doctrine, if thou ponder what depends upon thy practicing it. Consider, my dearest, what persecutions the devil has roused against thee in secret through the world and its inhabitants under different pretexts and appearances. If God has permitted them for the purpose of trying thee and for the exercise of his grace, it is proper, that, as far as thou are concerned, thou take it as a lesson and a warning. Remember that great is the treasure which thou carriest in a fragile vessel (II Cor. 2, 7), and that all hell conspires and rises up against thee. Thou livest in mortal flesh, surrounded and assailed by astute enemies. Be a Spouse of Christ my divine Son, and I shall be thy Mother and Instructress. Recognize, then, thy need and thy weakness, and correspond with me as a dearest daughter, as an obedient and perfect disciple in all things.

CHAPTER XXI.

ETERNAL HAPPINESS.

My daughter, lamentable and inexcusable is the ignorance of men in so knowingly forgetting the eternal glory, which God has prepared for those who dispose themselves to merit it. I wish that thou bitterly bewail and deplore this pernicious forgetfulness; for there is no doubt, that whoever wilfully forgets the eternal glory and happiness is in evident danger of losing it. No one is free from this guilt, not only because men do not apply much labor or effort in seeking and retaining the remembrance of this happiness; but they labor with all their powers in things that make them forget the end for which they were created. Undoubtedly this forgetfulness arises from their entangling themselves in the pride of life, the covetousness of the eyes, and the desires of the flesh (John 2, 16); for employing therein all the forces and faculties of their soul during the whole time of their life, they have no leisure, care or attention for the thoughts of eternal felicity. Let men acknowledge and confess, whether this recollection costs them more labor than to follow their blind passions, seeking after honors, possessions or the transitory pleasures, all of which have an end with this life, and which, after much striving and labor, many men do not, and can never attain.

How much easier is it for mortals to avoid such perversity, especially for the children of the Church, since they have at hand the easy means of faith and hope for attaining the truth! Even if to gain eternal happiness

were as difficult to obtain as honors and riches and other apparent advantages, it would be very foolish to labor as much for the false as for the true advantages for eternal punishment as for eternal glory. This abominable foolishness thou wilt perceive and bewail with tears, my daughter, if thou wilt consider the world in which thou livest: how it is disturbed by wars and discords; how many unhappy ones it contains, who seek death in exchange for a short and vain honor, vengeance and other most vile advantages, while they do not think or care for eternal life than irrational animals. It would be a blessing for them if like animals they could end altogether with the temporal death; but as the most of them act against justice, and others, who still seek to be just, live in forgetfulness of their end, the ones as well as the others incur the eternal death.

This is a sorrow beyond all sorrows, and a misfortune without equal and without remedy. Afflict thyself, lament and grieve without consolation over this ruin of so many souls bought by the blood of my divine Son. I assure thee, my dearest, that, if men would not make themselves so unworthy of it, my charity would urge me, in the celestial glory where thou knowest me to be, to send forth a voice through the whole world exclaiming: "Mortal and deceived men, what are you doing? For what purpose are you living? Do you realize what it is to see God face to face, and to participate in his eternal glory and share his company? Of what are you thinking? Who has thus disturbed and fascinated your judgment? What will you seek, if once you have lost this true blessing and happiness, since there is no other? The labor is short, the reward is infinite glory, and the punishment is eternal."

In connection with this sorrow, which I am try-

ing to excite in thee, seek to labor assiduously in order to evade the danger. A living example thou hast in my life, which was a continual suffering such as thou hast known; but when I came to my reward all of it seemed as nothing, and I forgot it as if it had not occurred. Resolve, my dear, to follow me in my labor; and though thy labor seem to exceed that of all the mortals, look upon it as most insignificant; let nothing seem to thee difficult or hard, or bitter, even to passing through fire and sword. Extend thy hand to great things, and shield thy domestics, the senses, with double vestments (Prov. 31, 19, 21), against hardships and sufferings to the utmost of their powers. At the same time I wish thee to be free from another error, that of men who say: let us secure salvation: greater or less glory does not matter; we shall all be together in that life. By this false principle, my daughter, eternal life is not made secure, but rather put at hazard; since it arises from great foolishness and want of divine love. Who seeks to make such a bargain with God, offends Him, and tempts Him to permit such souls to live in continued danger of perdition. Human weakness always tends to do less good than it desires to do; and when this desire is small, then it will execute very little, and hence risks losing all.

He who contents himself with the mediocre or lowest in virtue, always leaves in his will and in his inclinations an opening for earthly affections and love of the passing things. Such an opening is contrary to divine love and therefore unavoidably causes the loss of the latter and the ascendancy of the former. When the creature resolves to love God from all its heart and with all its powers, as He commands, God overlooks its human defects and shortcomings, and is pleased with their resolve to reap the highest rewards. But to despise them

or wilfully undervalue them shows not the love of children or of true friends, but the base fear of slaves, who are content to live and be let alone. If the saints could return to merit some additional degree of glory by suffering all torments to the day of judgment, they would doubtlessly return; because they have a true and perfect knowledge of the value of the reward and they love God with a perfect charity. It is not proper that this privilege be granted to the saints; but it was conceded to me, as thou hast recorded in this history; and my example confirms this truth. It also reproves the foolishness of those, who, in order to avoid suffering and the cross of Christ, are looking for a curtailed reward, one which is contrary to the inclination of God's goodness and contrary to his desire of seeing souls multiply their merits and gain copious rewards in the eternal felicity.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARY OUR ADVOCATE.

My daughter, if anything could lessen the enjoyment of the highest felicity and glory which I possess, and if, in it, I could be capable of any sorrow, without a doubt I would be grieved to see the holy Church and the rest of the world in its present state of labor, notwithstanding that men know me to be their Mother, Advocate and Protectress in heaven, ready to guide and assist them to eternal life. In this state of affairs, when the Almighty has granted me so many privileges as his Mother and when there are so many sources of help placed in my hands solely for the benefit of mortals and belonging to me as the Mother of clemency, it is a great cause of sorrow to me to see mortals force me to remain idle, and that, for want of calling upon me, so many souls should be lost. But if I cannot experience grief now, I may justly complain of men, that they load themselves with eternal damnation and refuse me the glory of saving their souls.

How much my intercession and the power I have in heaven is worth has never been hidden in the Church, for I have demonstrated my ability to save all by so many thousands of miracles, prodigies and favors operated in behalf of those devoted to me. With those who have called upon me in their needs I have always shown myself liberal, and the Lord has shown himself liberal to them on my account. Yet, though many are the souls whom I have helped, they are few in comparison with

those, whom I could and am willing to help. The world and the centuries are far advanced; while mortals are tardy in turning toward the knowledge of God; the children of the Church are involving themselves in the snares of satan; sinners multiply and crimes increase, because charity is getting cold even after God became incarnate and has taught the world by his life and doctrine, redeemed it by his Passion and Death, established his evangelical law for the guidance of his creatures, illustrated them by so many miracles, enlightenments, blessings, favors in the Church and in its saints. In addition to all this God has in his goodness opened up his mercies through me and my intercession, constituting me as Mother, Advocate, Protectress and Helper of all men, and, though I am most punctual and liberal in fulfilling all these offices, the result is inadequate. After all, since the crimes of men merit the chastisements, which threaten them and which they begin to feel, and since, under these circumstances, the malice of men has already reached the highest possible point, what wonder is it that divine Justice be irritated?

All this, my daughter, is true; but my kind and clement love exceeds all this malice, detains justice and still inclines the infinite Goodness toward men. The Most High still wishes to give liberally of his infinite treasures and resolves to favor those who know how to gain my intercession before God. This is the secure way and the powerful means of advancing the Church, of improving the Catholic reigns, of spreading the faith, of furthering the welfare of families and of states, of bringing the souls to grace and to the friendship of God. In this work, my daughter, I have desired thee to labor and assist according to thy power with the divine grace. Thy labor shall consist not only in having written my

life, but in imitating it by following the counsels and salutary teachings, which thou hast so abundantly received, both in what thou hast written and in other favors and blessings of the Almighty. Consider well, my dearest, thy strict obligation of serving me as thy only Mother, as thy legitimate and true Teacher and Superior, who favors thee with all these and many other condescensions. Thou hast likewise often renewed and ratified the vows of thy profession into my hands, and hast therein promised me especial obedience. Remember the promises thou hast so often given to the Lord and his angels. Many times We have manifested to thee our will, that thou live and act as one of them, and that thou, in carnal flesh, participate in the condition and activity of an angel; that thy conversation and intercourse be with those purest spirits; and just as they converse with each other, and just as the higher enlighten and illumine the lower, so they will enlighten and instruct thee in the perfections of thy Beloved and in the exercise of all virtues, especially of the mistress of all of them, charity, by which thou mayest be inflamed in the love of thy sweet Master and of thy fellowmen. To this state thou must aspire with all thy powers, in order that the Most High may find thee apt for the fulfillment of his most holy will and of all his wishes. May his powerful right hand give thee his eternal benediction, show thee the joy of his countenance and grant thee peace; see that thou do not make thyself unworthy

